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# THE NEW YORKER





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LOUIS VUITTON



# THE NEW YORKER

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**DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT:** Opinions and analysis by Rebecca Mead, Jelani Cobb, and others.

**PODCASTS:** On the Political Scene, Joshua Yaffa discusses Vladimir Putin and Russia with Dorothy Wickenden. On Out Loud, Nicholas Dawidoff and Adam Gopnik talk with Amelia Lester and David Haglund about why people become sports fans.

**HUMOR:** A Daily Cartoon on the news, by Kaamran Hafeez.

**FICTION AND POETRY:** On the Fiction Podcast, Allan Gurganus reads Grace Paley's "My Father Addresses Me on the Facts of Old Age" and discusses the story with Deborah Treisman. Plus, Matthew Dickman and Erica Jong read their poems.

**SLIDE SHOWS:** On Photo Booth, Alexis Okeowo writes about Ruth McDowall's portraits of Boko Haram abductees. Plus, selections from Olivier Rousteing's Instagram feed.

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# THE MAIL

## THE WITCHES

Stacy Schiff's piece on Puritans convicting people of sorcery brought to mind my family history ("The Witches of Salem," September 7th). Rebecca Nurse and Mary Easty, my aunts many times removed, were hanged in the Salem witchcraft trials, and a third relative, Sarah Cloyse, was imprisoned in chains for thirteen months. Salem, founded in 1629, was then a deeply troubled place. There were bitter fights over the hiring of church ministers and land disputes that pitted neighboring families against one another. The witchcraft trials began when a young woman named Tituba, who had been brought from the West Indies and enslaved, taught a group of young girls about palmistry, fortune-telling, necromancy, magic, and spiritualism. When the girls were asked about their strange behavior, they pointed to people whom they had heard their parents disparage. The colonists, who were deeply superstitious, became convinced that witchcraft was harming the community. They believed that Satan was waging war against God for control of the world, and that the final battle was taking place in Salem in 1692. As a consequence, my eighth great-grandfather lost two sisters, and nearly a third, in the process.

*Henry Turner  
Garrison, N.Y.*

Early modern witchcraft beliefs had no historical or even Biblical roots. Schiff makes reference to the Biblical injunction "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus, 22:18), which serves as an example of the Puritans' false interpretation and mistranslation of the Bible. The word "witch" stands in for the Hebrew word *kashaph*, which appears twelve times in the Old Testament. It can mean "poisoner" or "astrologer," and has nothing to do with the Christian concept of a witch that the settlers in Salem adopted from Europe's deadly period of persecutions against alleged witches. This new notion of witchcraft depended on

a uniquely Christian demonology, and reflects the larger translation problems that invariably accompany many modern-day religious practices.

*Robert Blackey  
Emeritus Professor of History  
California State University  
San Bernardino, Calif.*

I am seven generations removed from Samuel Sewall. (My great-great-grandfather married Sewall's great-granddaughter.) On May 27, 1692, the newly arrived royal governor, Sir William Phips, was told of the witchcraft disturbance in Salem. Sewall was among those appointed to the Oyer and Terminer, a special court ordered to try those accused. Phips promptly left Boston to become acquainted with his vast territory to the north. Ola Elizabeth Winslow writes, in "Samuel Sewall of Boston" (1964), "Along with his fellow judges, Samuel Sewall brought to the trial sessions an almost unchallenged heritage of belief in the reality of witches." Schiff's article notes that at the opening meeting of the court in Salem the first witch was sentenced to death by hanging. The trials continued; in the end, nineteen women and men were killed. Schiff provides stark evidence that the Boston minister Cotton Mather diligently stoked the panic. That October, Governor Phips returned to the city and found that his wife was among those accused. He disbanded the court and, on January 3, 1693, freed all those in jail or on trial, and stayed all further executions. Four years later, public sentiment finally turned. A fast of contrition was proposed for January 14, 1696. At church, Sewall had a parishioner read aloud his written pronouncement: "To take the Blame and shame of it," and to ask that God "would pardon that sin."

*Richard S. Greeley  
St. Davids, Pa.*

---

## JUSTICE FOR ALL

Evan Osnos's piece about the Khan family demonstrates the wisdom of this observation by Justice Louis Brandeis:

"The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding" ("The Imam's Curse," September 21st). A lack of understanding of the culture of Pakistani Muslim immigrants appears to have led to the misinterpretation of innocent conduct as a threat to our national security. The result was what seems a dubious conviction of the Miami imam Hafiz Khan and unwarranted prosecution of members of his family. Terrible injustices can occur in the current climate of heightened national security, brought on by fear of terrorism. The United States must do a better job of educating those who work for the F.B.I. and as federal prosecutors. We must also be better able to provide compensation to people who were wrongly prosecuted or convicted.

*Denty Cheatham  
Nashville, Tenn.*

---

## TASTE, MEMORY

Oliver Sacks, in his posthumously published essay, speculates that his love for gefilte fish, while part of his conscious memory from as early as the age of four, was probably acquired much earlier ("Filter Fish," September 14th). He is certainly correct: research at the Monell Chemical Senses Center, where I served as director and president, and at other labs, has shown that deep, emotionally tinged flavor memories arise extraordinarily early in life. These occur during feeding in infancy, through exposure to flavors that the nursing mother consumes and transmits to her infant during breastfeeding, and even through flavor molecules sensed by the fetus prior to birth. Early flavor imprinting underlies the most profound memories humans have. Sacks's wonderfully evocative notion of his first flavor memories and of the emotions ushering him out of this life speaks to the resonance of these early, nurturing experiences.

*Gary K. Beauchamp  
Philadelphia, Pa.*

•  
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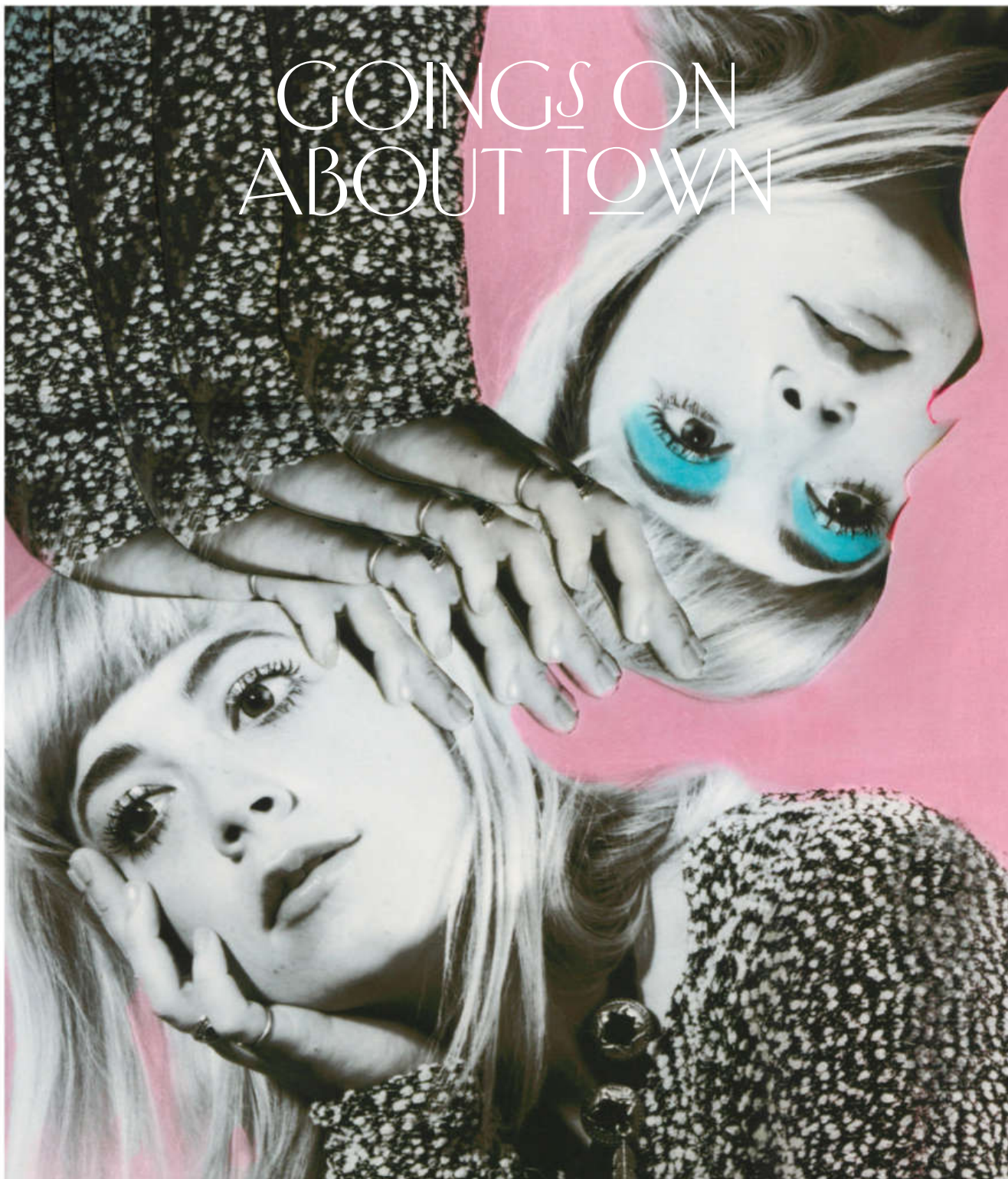


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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



OCTOBER 2015    WEDNESDAY 7TH    THURSDAY 8TH    FRIDAY 9TH    SATURDAY 10TH    SUNDAY 11TH    MONDAY 12TH    TUESDAY 13TH

**THE ETHOS** OF the buzzy night spot Baby's All Right—the relaxed atmosphere, expert music programming, and dollar tacos—has turned it into South Williamsburg's very own Foot Clan hideout, a rare sort of venue that feels designed to engender good vibes. The stage, which is adorned with a site-specific light installation by John Cole, made from nearly four hundred backlit antique ashtrays, is a beacon for indie rockers looking for an intimate performance space: Beach House, DIIV, and Savages have played there. This weekend, on Oct. 10, the young writer and producer Danielle (Danz) Johnson, who performs sugary synth pop as Computer Magic (above), celebrates the release of her new album, "Davos." The record is essentially her U.S. debut, even though in Japan and France she's already a star.

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# CLASSICAL MUSIC

## OPERA

### Metropolitan Opera

The plot of *"Il Trovatore"* is notoriously far-fetched—fiery Gypsy curses, babies switched at birth—but it inspired four of Verdi's most explosive characters. Anna Netrebko, in opulent voice as Leonora, and Dolora Zajick, who blazes through Azucena's music with scorched-earth intensity, lead the current revival of David McVicar's straightforward production. Yonghoon Lee contributes big high notes to the role of Manrico, and Vitaliy Bilyy joins the cast as Count di Luna (replacing the inimitable Dmitri Hvorostovsky). On the podium, Marco Armiliato takes a slow-burning approach to Verdi's high-voltage drama, building the music to thrilling climaxes. (Oct. 7 at 7:30 and Oct. 10 at 8.) • **"Tannhäuser,"** a gateway into Wagner's mid-career, makes a fascinating document of stylistic development, with its seamless transitions, voluptuous, boundary-pushing approach to harmonies, and grand vocal writing. The score's superhuman demands should be secure in the hands of the Met's topnotch cast, including Johan Botha, Eva-Maria Westbroek, Michelle DeYoung, and the always excellent Peter Mattei, who, as Wolfram, gets one of the opera's loveliest moments, the "Hymn to the Evening Star"; James Levine is slated to conduct. (Oct. 8 and Oct. 12 at 7.) • In **"Anna Bolena,"** Donizetti's fanciful take on British history, Henry VIII entraps his second wife with a former lover in order to have her executed. Sondra Radvanovsky gives a towering performance as the wronged queen: her voice, with its fast vibrato, rings like huge, clanging bells, filling the magnificent castle chambers of David McVicar's production with righteous fury. Ildar Abdrazakov sings the king with thuggish authority, and Jamie Barton is in sumptuous voice as his new paramour, Giovanna (Jane) Seymour. Taylor Stayton joins the cast as Anna's onetime lover, Percy, and Milijana Nikolic is Seymour on Oct. 9; Armiliato. (Oct. 9 and Oct. 13 at 7:30.) • With the exception of an ornately carved headboard that could have come from a Rialto bed-and-breakfast, there isn't a trace of Venetian imagery in Bartlett Sher's abstract, pseudo-nineteenth-century production of Verdi's **"Otello,"** which opened the season on Sept. 21. Add to that Sher's unimaginative handling of crowd scenes and you wind up with a show that only warms up as the jealous Moor's blood begins to boil—but once it does, it crackles with

malignant energy. (On opening night, only after intermission did Yannick Nézet-Séguin's conducting begin to acquire texture and definition.) The singing of Aleksandrs Antonenko, in the punishing title role, continually gains conviction, but the performances of Sonya Yoncheva, who brings a gently burnished voice to the role of Desdemona, and Željko Lučić, a subtly menacing Iago, are a constant source of pleasure. (Oct. 10 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

### New York Philharmonic:

#### Carnegie Hall Opening Night

The nation's leading concert hall invites the orchestra that was once its tenant back to kick off the new season—which makes sense, since if David Geffen Hall is ever closed down for renovations the Phil would probably want to spend a lot more time here. "Vivo," a work co-commissioned by the orchestra and Carnegie Hall from one of Alan Gilbert's longtime favorites, the distinguished Finnish modernist Magnus Lindberg, will doubtless provide a vigorous and colorful kickoff to a high-octane program that continues with Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto (with Evgeny Kissin) and the Suite No. 2 from Ravel's *"Daphnis et Chloé."* (212-247-7800. Oct. 7 at 7.)

### Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, in town to bring his considerable podium talents to the Met's *"Otello,"* leads his own orchestra at Carnegie Hall, in a blue-chip program that, in its embrace of European-nationalist Romanticism, seems beamed in from the nineteen-forties—the Suite No. 1 from Grieg's *"Peer Gynt,"* Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2 (one of his most lyrical works, with the intensely committed Gil Shaham), and Sibelius's Fifth Symphony, a grand canvas of a piece from a composer who has been a specialty of this sumptuous ensemble for some seventy-five years. (212-247-7800. Oct. 13 at 8.)

### American Classical Orchestra

Thomas Crawford's ensemble, a stalwart presence in New York's increasingly vibrant period-performance scene, offers a true rarity in its next concert: the righteous oratorio *"Day of Judgment"* (1755), by Georg Phillip Telemann, a composer long thought of as a prolific craftsman of pleasantly well-made instrumental works. In

addition to the orchestra's chorus, the vocal soloists include Jennifer Bates, Donna Breitzer, Brian Giebler, and Jonathan Woody. (St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, West End Ave. at 87th St. acnyc.org. Oct. 13 at 8.)

## RECITALS

### David Fray

The photogenic French pianist brings his extroverted Schubert interpretations to the glamorous Board of Officers Room at the Park Avenue Armory to open the venue's third annual recital series. The program includes the Viennese master's Sonatas in E Minor (D. 566), A Minor (D. 784), and G Major (D. 894). (Park Ave. at 66th St. armoryonpark.org. Oct. 6 at 7:30 and Oct. 9 at 8.)

### Miller Theatre:

#### John Luther Adams

For many years, Adams—still something of an outsider, despite his recent slew of honors—has composed pieces that stand as a kind of musical aurora borealis, full of awe and distance, of color and wonder, that powerfully evoke his Alaskan home-escape. For three nights, Miller pays homage to the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer with a sequence of New York premieres performed by the International Contemporary Ensemble and the JACK Quartet, under the baton of Steven Schick, himself something of a force of nature. The mini-festival begins with *"Clouds of Forgetting, Clouds of Unknowing";* continues with the thoughtful, dedicatory work *"For Lou Harrison";* and concludes with *"In the White Silence,"* made in honor of Adams's mother. (Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com. Oct. 7, Oct. 9, and Oct. 10 at 8.)

### TENET: "The Sounds of Time"

In medieval times, the *trouvères* roved around much of what is now France, alighting on villages and towns to entertain with songs, recitations, and theatricals—ribald, profound, and everything in between—that were often set to memorable (and occasionally intricate) music, an early counter-strand to the stately Masses that composers wrote for the Church. And who better than Jolle Greenleaf's daring ensemble, comprised of some of the city's finest vocal talent (under the guidance of the guest director Robert Mealy), to bring this tantalizing repertoire to midtown? (St. Malachy's—The Actor's Chapel, 239 W. 49th St. tenet.nyc. Oct. 9 at 7.)

### Maurizio Pollini

This scrupulously thoughtful musician has, for decades, offered interpretations characterized by a juxtaposition of quiet intellectual dignity and indomitable integrity, making him something of a pianist's pianist. This program, consisting of works by Schumann (the Fantasy in C Major, in which the composer's multiple musical personalities crash into one another head-on) and Chopin (including the brooding Nocturnes, Op. 55, and the Scherzo No. 3 in C-Sharp Minor), should offer this artist plenty of room to roam. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Oct. 11 at 3.)

### New Music at (Le) Poisson Rouge

Two back-to-back events highlight the downtown music club's cutting-edge cachet. First, the outstanding composer-bassoonist Brad Balliett teams up with his pals in the Metropolis Ensemble in *"Multiphonics,"* a concert exploring the instrument's extremes in, among other works, an electronic reimagining of Mozart's Bassoon Concerto (by the composer Bora Yoon) and a song cycle (with the mezzo-soprano Majel Connery) by the bassoonist's twin brother, Doug Balliett, that uses texts and images evoking the eternal mystery of Cleopatra. On the next evening, the venue hosts a CD-release party for the thoughtful and inventive young composer Eric Nathan, featuring such fine musicians as the Momenta Quartet, the oboist Peggy Pearson, and the violist Samuel Rhodes (formerly of the Juilliard String Quartet). (158 Bleecker St. lprnyc.com. Oct. 11 at 6 and Oct. 12 at 7:30.)

### Ensemble LPR:

#### "Pierrot Lunaire"

The instrumental quintet that Schoenberg assembled for his touchstone atonal work—flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, plus a singer—created such an engrossing sound world that it became a modernist standby. (The work's titular moonstruck clown ricochets from expressions of slinky seductiveness to maddening obsession.) In keeping with that tradition, (Le) Poisson Rouge's resident ensemble, concertizing off-piste at the American Irish Historical Society, performs Schoenberg's masterpiece alongside Ricardo Romanero's new work *"Lamplighting,"* which uses the same ensemble. The evening's vocalists are the soprano Mellissa Hughes and the mezzo-soprano Naomi O'Connell. (991 Fifth Ave. ensemblelpr.com. Oct. 13 at 9.)

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# NIGHT LIFE



## CLUB KID

*D.j. Karizma keeps in touch with his Baltimore roots.*

**WHEN KRIS KLAYTON WAS GROWING UP**, in the nineteen-eighties, the radio stations offered him the usual enticements: pop music, state-of-the-art R. & B., insurgent hip-hop. But because he lived in Baltimore there was also something else: by the decade's end, the city was in thrall to rowdy, up-tempo dance music, curated by an influential local radio d.j. named Frank Ski. On Ski's show, rappers shared the airwaves with the Chicago producers who were pioneering a new kind of dance music known as house, as well as their European counterparts. And by the early nineties this mixture of far-flung sounds had given rise to a local genre, Baltimore club music, defined by its clattering rhythms and its exuberant chants, which weren't always radio-friendly. (One early classic was "Whores in This House," a 1992 track with lyrics consisting entirely of a blunt—and not necessarily censorious—declaration: "There's some whores in this house.")

Klayton witnessed this musical evolution, and took part in it, too. He adopted the d.j. name Karizma, built a following in the city's clubs, and produced some influential Baltimore club records of his own, including "Blow," from 1994, a dance-floor staple built out of little more than a break beat and a deftly dissected sample of a referee's whistle. But Baltimore club records generally needed to be quick and dirty, and as Klayton learned more about production and composition his productions got slower and more elegant.

In 1999, he released "The Power," in which a disco sample and a jazzy piano improvisation remained in orbit for nearly nine minutes. He had moved from Baltimore club, one of the most

raucous dance genres, to deep house, one of the mellowest. In the years since, he has built a worldwide following, and developed a reputation for long and subtle d.j. sets—three hours might be considered a good start, and ten hours isn't out of the question.

But Klayton never left Baltimore behind. For a number of years, in the two-thousands, he balanced his international touring with a residency at a Baltimore night club, which helped him stay in touch with the city's discriminating listeners, and dancers. And using the electronic turntables known as CDJs, he developed a d.j. style that incorporated live looping and sampling, tapping out counter-rhythms to roughen up the smooth house records he loves—in his sets, the choppy and propulsive spirit of Baltimore club music lives on. When he's producing music, Clayton uses a number of aliases. As Kaytronik, he turns out records that are a bit darker, with menacing electronic tones; as K2, he creates buoyant reëdits of R. & B. songs. But as a d.j. he brings all of these characters into the booth with him. Early next year, he plans to begin a new residency at Flash, a club in Washington, D.C., but first, on Oct. 8, he is coming to Output, in Brooklyn. He won't have anything like ten hours, but he should get enough time behind the decks to make listeners and dancers wish he had much more.

—*Kelefa Sanneh*



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*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### ChameleonsOx

Some shows are made for black leather jackets. In the eighties, this seminal U.K. post-punk act, known as the Chameleons, released three nearly perfect records of brooding, textured guitar rock. Though shreds of their influence can be heard all over (Interpol comes to mind), they remained criminally underappreciated until very recently. In 2011, they were spotlighted by the dark minds behind the now defunct gothy dance party Wierd; since then their reputation has grown, especially in New York, where they're revered as elder statesmen. The local opener here is **Anasazi**, a tribal death-rock band with a new long player, "Nasty Witch Rock." Also with **Pleasure Leftists**. (The Wick, 260 Meserole St., Brooklyn. 347-338-3612. Oct. 8.)

### Mac DeMarco

Trying too hard is rock-and-roll kryptonite, and this offbeat Canadian indie rocker proves the point. The songs are playful and tuneful, like the best of Pavement, and it's his slacker-next-door quality that fans seem to respond to—and the sense that you could grab a beer with him after the show at this lovely venue, an hour up the Hudson on the Metro North. That seems easy enough to do: his newest album, offhandedly titled "Another One," ends with DeMarco lazily reading out his home address, in Far Rockaway, with the invitation, "Stop on by, I'll make you a cup of coffee. See you later!" (Capitol Theatre, 149 Westchester Ave., Port Chester, N.Y. 914-937-4126. Oct. 10.)

### Eleanor Friedberger

Widely known as half of the brother-sister indie-rock duo Fiery Furnaces, Friedberger is also a compelling solo artist. Since the band went on hiatus, in 2011, she has released two solo albums. The more recent one, "Personal Record," was stuffed with catchy, danceable songs that showcased her gift for melody and whimsical lyrics. ("If that was goodbye then I am a fly / And the future's guaranteed," she sings on "Stare at the Sun," one of the album's standout tracks.) Even Friedberger's breakup tunes are delivered with sunny warmth, despite the heartache and longing she details. (BAMcafé, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Oct. 10.)

### Luna

This dream-pop band was founded in New York by the New Zealand-raised Harvard graduate Dean Wareham back in 1991, a distant epoch when the music industry was flush and optimistic. Luna's formation followed the dissolution of Wareham's influential trio, Galaxie 500, whose melodic, stripped-down approach helped shape the softer side of nineties indie rock. Luna took that ethos further, crafting impeccable, deceptively simple songs with Brazilian and country touches which emphasized clarity and narrative guitar solos. The group, which broke up in 2005, re-formed earlier this year; these three performances are the band's first club shows in a decade in its former home town. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-260-4700. Oct. 7-8; Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Oct. 9.)

### Panda Bear

You may not hear it on the surface, but this quirky psychedelic solo project, led by Noah Lennox, of Animal Collective, has always flirted with the watery, aquatic echo of Jamaican dub reggae.

Lennox's latest album takes the connection to the extreme. The title, "Panda Bear Meets the Grim Reaper," is itself a play on classic dub LPs, which would place producers in particular, often hilariously specific situations, like "King Tubby Meets Rockers Uptown." But it also may work as prophecy; in a recent interview, Lennox suggested that this collection of murky freak-out music may be the last under the Panda Bear moniker, so you're advised to find a way to snag a ticket to one of his three sold-out CMJ shows this week. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-2111. Oct. 13-15.)

### Kurt Vile

The former War on Drugs guitarist, a psych-folk icon in his native Philadelphia, is touring with a new LP, "B'lieve I'm Goin Down . . ." released last month through Matador Records. The songs are once again defined by meandering guitar noodling and lonely, mumbled vocals, which tend to focus on isolation, a state that Vile seems comfortable with. His self-awareness is as appealing as his melodies, and he's stoked a reputation as a bit of a slacker maharishi—at the very least, a look inside Vile's head might make you think a bit more deeply about what's going on in your own. Also with **Waxahatchee**. (Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. 212-353-1600. Oct. 7.)

### The War on Drugs

Adam Granduciel and Kurt Vile founded this group in 2005 in Philadelphia. Vile left after the first album, and Granduciel started composing with a bigger palette than the one he and his co-founder first envisioned for the band, now a sextet. It's a soundscape that should be exciting in the majestic expanse of Radio City Music Hall. Every musician doubles on keyboard, and every song on the latest album, "Lost in the Dream," builds, breathes, and rocks with a particularly satisfying psychedelic patina. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. Oct. 8.)

### Yo La Tengo

These legendary Hoboken indie rockers have been around for more than thirty years, and, partially in celebration of their pearl anniversary, they're taking over this richly renovated movie palace for a stop on their current tour. The quartet's early guitarist Dave Schramm, who was only in the group for two years, recently rejoined the band, and they released a new album, "Stuff Like That There," in August. At Kings Theatre, they will perform a mostly acoustic set. (1027 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn. 718-856-5464. Oct. 10.)

### The Zombies

In the spring of 1967, these British-invasion rockers walked into Abbey Road Studios, in which the Beatles had just finished recording "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," and started tracking their own masterpiece, "Odessey and Oracle." Just three years earlier, the Zombies had a No. 1 U.S. hit ("She's Not There"), but after failing to replicate that success they began plotting their breakup. Before bowing out, the group wanted to make one last record, and, freed from commercial expectations and outside producers, what emerged was twelve brilliant compositions marked by complex vocal harmonies, lush orchestration, and daring key modulations that rivalled, and sometimes surpassed, "Sgt. Pepper's." Initially, "Odessey and Oracle" bombed, and the band followed through on its breakup. Two years later, they scored an unlikely hit with the album's closer, "Time of the Season," which reached No. 3 on the American charts. Now, nearly five decades later, the Zombies, who began touring again in 2004, will

play "Odessey and Oracle" in its entirety for the first time in the United States, along with songs from a new record, "Still Got That Hunger," and a smattering of earlier hits. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. Oct. 9.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Karrin Allyson

Allyson is a gently swinging singer whose peripatetic musical wanderings have found her flitting from France to Brazil and disparate jazz points between. Her album "Many a New Day: Karrin Allyson Sings Rodgers & Hammerstein" reimagines well-worn favorites associated with "South Pacific," "The Sound of Music," and "Oklahoma." (Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Oct. 6-10.)

### Jane Ira Bloom

One of the few master improvisers to concentrate solely on the soprano saxophone, Bloom has also based work on her obsession with space travel—let's see if the recent news about Mars has inspired her. Her quartet includes **Dominic Fallacaro** on piano and **Matt Wilson** on drums. (Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Oct. 11.)

### Lea Delaria

Bringing a dream project to fruition, Delaria (Big Boo to her "Orange Is the New Black" fans) released "House of David," on which David Bowie anthems like "Rebel Rebel" and "Suffragette City" are given left-of-center jazz transformations. The audacious move won't come as a surprise to anyone familiar with Delaria's patently brazen work. (Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Oct. 7.)

### Kurt Elling

One might wonder what Frank Sinatra would have thought of his fellow-vocalist Kurt Elling's musical adaptations of such poets as Theodore Roethke and Rumi. But there's no doubt that Elling has the requisite chops to pull off an artful and heartfelt tribute to Sinatra, who would have been a hundred this year. (Café Carlyle, Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Oct. 13-17.)

### Tom Harrell

With his First Impressions ensemble, the estimable trumpeter and composer Tom Harrell augments a standard jazz quintet with a guitar, cello, and violin—in effect, a compact string section. Harrell is a veteran player who seems to be getting more adventurous as he ages. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Oct. 6-11.)

### Buster Poindexter

Even in his guise as the musically voracious lounge lizard Poindexter, the bruising energy that fuelled David Johansen in his days as a young rocker is still apparent. The Carlyle Café may seem an unlikely locale for him, but Poindexter has made this tony night spot a home away from home, filling the room with rootsy rock, blues, and standards to which he's applied his own endearingly louche charm. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Oct. 6-10.)

### Cecile McLorin Salvant

Riding the critical success of her newly released second album, "For One to Love," Salvant will be going out on a limb here. For this one-night engagement, she joins forces with the pianist **Adam Birnbaum**, the drummer **Joe Farnsworth**, and the celebrated bassist **Rufus Reid**, instead of her usual support team, the Aaron Diehl Trio. (Ginny's Supper Club, 310 Malcolm X Blvd. 212-421-3821. Oct. 7.)





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A nineteenth-century Mangaaka by the Yombe group of the Chiloango River region.

## POWER SURGE

*Four hundred years of Kongo civilization reign supreme at the Met.*

**MUSEUM SHOWS OF AFRICAN TRIBAL ART** often suffer from double binds of aesthetics and ethnography: objects that stun but bewilder and educational material that informs but devitalizes. Not “Kongo: Power and Majesty,” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The exhibits and texts in this show combine to unfold an enthralling, epic tale, which spans more than four centuries, from the late fifteenth to the early twentieth, in the Central African regions that are now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and Angola. You will come away with vivid memories of the art—some hundred and fifty wonderful pieces—both for what it is and for what it says.

When the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão arrived at the mouth of the Congo River, in 1483, and erected a stele invoking the authority of his king, he encountered a courtly civilization that lacked little in refinement except written language. Fantastically carved ivory horns and geometrically patterned raffia weavings from that time bespeak lofty traditions. Amicable

trade relations soon brought examples north. Two elegant horns entered the collection of Cosimo I de’ Medici, in Florence.

Kongo chiefs long controlled trade with Europe. The imports weren’t only material. Christianity took hold, as witnessed at the Met by fiercely expressive cast-brass crucifixes by African artisans which convey the ardor of conversion. The Kongo’s main export, until the early eighteenth century, is terrible just to think of: slaves. By the end of that century, something like a third of the region’s population had been sold. (Nineteenth-century spiral reliefs on elephant tusks narrate scenes of the human trafficking.) Thereafter, competition for resources among Great Britain, France, and Belgium crushed local sovereignty, with catastrophic effects that Joseph Conrad dramatized in “Heart of Darkness,” based on his five-month stint on a Belgian riverboat in 1890.

The Kongo’s religious and social orders relied on priests who, dispensing healing and justice, mediated between life and death. We learn from statuary in the exhibition the color code of those realms: black for life, white for death, and red for states of transition. Maternal fecundity was another major theme. Kneeling or sitting cross-legged, eloquently carved females dandle males who range from babies to what look like tiny adults. (One grasps a woman’s breast with one hand and his erect penis with the other.) Robust unions of the carnal and the spiritual declare confidence in the interrelation of the here and now and the beyond.

The show concludes, thunderously, with fifteen of the twenty known surviving Mangaakas from the nineteenth century: wooden male figures, most nearly four feet high, with stout legs, stomach pouches for magical substances, and beetling heads that sport wide, staring white eyes and sharpened teeth. They bristle with nails and bits of iron, each the record of a wish or a curse. They were made as last-ditch defensive implements amid the colonial devastation of Kongo societies. It feels as if all the force of millennia of tribal experience were clenched into fists of violent conviction. There are no other sculptures in the world so fierce and sorrowing.

—Peter Schjeldahl



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## MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

### METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"Kongo: Power and Majesty." Through Jan. 3.

### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Picasso Sculpture." Through Feb. 7.

### MOMA PSI

"Greater New York." Opens Oct. 11.

### GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting." Opens Oct. 9.

### WHITNEY MUSEUM

"Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist." Through Jan. 17.

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Impressionism and the Caribbean: Francisco Oller and His Transatlantic World." Through Jan. 3.

### AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

"The Butterfly Conservatory." Through May 29.

### ASIA SOCIETY

"Philippine Gold." Through Jan. 3.

### FRICK COLLECTION

"Andrea del Sarto: The Renaissance Workshop in Action." Opens Oct. 7.

### MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

"Ernest Hemingway: Between Two Wars." Through Jan. 31.

### NEW MUSEUM

"Jim Shaw: The End Is Here." Opens Oct. 7.

### NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Superheroes in Gotham." Opens Oct. 9.

### SCULPTURECENTER

"Anthea Hamilton: Lichen! Libido! Chastity!" Through Jan. 4.

## GALLERIES SHORT LIST

### DOWNTOWN

Jean-Philippe Delhomme Terras

325 Broome St. 917-517-4929. Opens Oct. 8.

R. H. Quaytman

Abreu  
36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Opens Oct. 7.

Clement Siatous

Preston  
301 Broome St.  
212-431-1105.  
Through Oct. 17.

Martine Syms

Donahue  
99 Bowery. 646-896-1368.  
Through Nov. 1.

"Richard Pousette-Dart: 1930s"

The Drawing Center  
35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166.  
Through Dec. 20.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Metropolitan Museum

"Wolfgang Tillmans: Book for Architects"

The German photographer, whose current show at the Zwirner gallery in Chelsea is a must-see, exhibits a two-channel videotape of landscapes, interiors, aerial views, and still-lives made throughout the world over the past decade. Projected on perpendicular walls (evoking facing pages in an open book), the piece successfully translates Tillmans's idiosyncratic installation style. Color images, big and small, flash by individually and in overlapping groups, juxtaposing broad views and intimate details. Landmarks and starchitecture are rare, overwhelmed by the vernacular and the everyday: office corridors, hotel lobbies, construction sites, subway platforms, dance clubs, public toilets, a doorknob, a heating duct. The range is encyclopedic, the experience exhilarating. Through Nov. 1.

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

### Sergej Jensen

The Danish artist, who works in New York, is best known for sewing found textiles together as a form of unpainted abstraction. In his etiolated new works, which employ acrylic paint, charcoal, and chalk, Jensen floats hazy memories of Western art history in dull seas of beige or gray. A few of the works contain clear quotations—the singing angels of Piero's nativity, Degas's horse racers, the slumped Greeks of Delacroix's "Massacre at Chios"—but many more are deliberately obscure. Jensen's heretofore concealed technical skills are impressive, but he seems to use them only to ring the death knell of a tradition of representation. It seems like an easy way out. Through Oct. 31. (Galerie Buchholz, 17 E. 82nd St. 646-964 4276.)

### John O'Reilly

In his mid-eighties, the master of photographic collage is as dexterous and witty as ever. The works here, made between 1968 and 2015, are poetic and densely allusive. Shards of Velázquez, Watteau, and Eakins combine with found snapshots and vintage erotica in intricate, dreamlike (sometimes nightmarish) tableaux. O'Reilly has a miniaturist's gift for compression, weaving strands of myth, faith, and desire. In one uncharacteristically large piece, tiny acrobatic figures dive and leap through a pitch-black space outlined by flames, as if frolicking on a solar eclipse. Through Oct. 17. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-262-5050.)

### "The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra and Its Legacy"

The curator Alison Gingeras reevaluates the art of the painters Asger Jorn, Karel Appel, and the other northern-European members of

the avant-garde Cobra movement, whose work from the late forties and early fifties was influential on their side of the Atlantic. Carnavalesque tableaux by members of the collective Helhesten (a Cobra precursor almost unknown outside Denmark) paved the way for proudly tawdry, sometimes primitivist postwar paintings by Jorn, the more calligraphic abstractions of the still active Pierre Alechinsky, and the inscrutable bronze totems of Sonja Ferlov. (Her husband, Ernest Mancoba, one of South Africa's first black modern artists, is featured here, too, with impressive runic works on paper.) New York's museums, still reluctant to let the grit of postwar Europe intrude on the triumphant narrative of postwar American painting, should take note. Through Oct. 17. (Blum & Poe, 19 E. 66th St. 212-249-2249.)

### "Swedish Wooden Toys"

Spanning five centuries, this Nordic fun house is not just for children; it's a rigorous undertaking that charts the surprising endurance of wooden handicraft and the role that toys played in the formation of Sweden's national character. Alongside sleds, skates, and skis are numerous nineteenth-century hobbyhorses and rocking bulls, some in blond wood, others painted the falun red of houses in the Swedish countryside. With the advent of industrialization (and the welfare state), the horses were superseded by wooden cars, sailboats, and the popular train sets manufactured by Brio. The show's highlight: a dozen doll houses, ranging from artisanal to mass produced. The most ornate is the oldest, a mirror-bedecked cabinet commissioned by Queen Ulrika Eleonora for her daughter in the late seventeenth century; the most impressive is an armoire from around 1900, retrofitted by an amateur toymaker into a bustling apartment block, complete with working elevator. Through Jan. 17. (Bard Graduate Center, 18 W. 86th St. 212-501-3000.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Mishka Henner

The Belgian artist is best known for meticulously descriptive aerial photographs, like the Texas cattle ranch included here, with a drainage pond that looks like an open wound. But he's also a savvy Conceptualist, appropriating and conflating works by Ed Ruscha and Gerhard Richter, and stripping images from Robert Frank's famous series "The Americans" down to key details (a hat, a bit of ornate molding) in a series he titles with the bad pun "Less Americans." No one could accuse the restless Henner of being averse to experimentation—the show also includes a light box and two videos—but the result is a scattered focus that may leave viewers wishing they'd had the chance to explore any of his ideas in greater depth. Through

Oct. 24. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

### "Crow's Eye View: The Korean Peninsula"

First seen in last year's Venice Architecture Biennale, where it won the prestigious Golden Lion, this dense exhibition considers urbanism from both sides of Korea's demilitarized zone. They have little in common, but that's the point—divergent political and economic systems gave rise, among a newly divided people, to very different landscapes. The documentation of Cold War-era projects from South Korea is fascinating, notably the impressive brutalism of Kim Swoo Geun, but it's the research into North Korean architecture, seen in photographs, posters, and even a kitschy commissioned comic book, that makes the show vital. Don't miss a fascinating film about Pyongyang, which intermingles testimony from exiled engineers with grimly hilarious propaganda, in which the Great Leader exhorts the virtues of housing blocks and boulevards to teary-eyed urban planners. Through Oct. 17. (Kim, 525 W. 21st St. 212-716-1100.)

### "The Xerox Book"

In 1968, the maverick art dealer Seth Siegelau invited seven artists—Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Lawrence Weiner—to contribute to an exhibition that would exist only as collated photocopies. The low-res medium posed no problem for the men; Huebler proclaimed that a dot on the page was in fact "one billion miles behind the picture plane." In some contemporary-art circles, vintage copies of the show-in-a-catalogue (select pages of which are on view) command the kind of reverence once reserved for religious relics—the fine assortment here of related works by the book's artists, notably LeWitt's spare early wall drawings and Andre's typewritten poems, helps reveal what all the fuss is about. Through Oct. 24. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

### Tema Stauffer

The streets of Paterson, New Jersey, provide the backdrop for these unusually engaging portraits. Photographed in natural light, in subdued dusty color, Stauffer's pictures feel like genuine exchanges, never voyeuristic or distanced. If some of her subjects appear wary, they are also totally present, looking directly at Stauffer and, by extension, at us. The portraits of children and teen-agers are often arresting (a boy named Jorge stares at the camera with a disarmingly steely gaze), but it's the adults who look ready to tell a heartbreaking story or two. Through Oct. 25. (Wolf, 70 Orchard St. 212-925-0025.)



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# THE THEATRE

## ALSO NOTABLE

**AMAZING GRACE**  
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**CLOUD NINE**  
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**THE CURIOUS INCIDENT  
OF THE DOG IN THE  
NIGHT-TIME**  
Ethel Barrymore

**DESIRE**  
59E59. Through Oct. 10.

**DROP DEAD PERFECT**  
Theatre at St. Clement's.  
Through Oct. 11.

**THE FLICK**  
Barrow Street Theatre

**FONDLY, COLLETTE  
RICHLAND**  
New York Theatre  
Workshop. (Reviewed in  
this issue.)

**FUN HOME**  
Circle in the Square

**HAMILTON**  
Richard Rodgers

**HAMLET IN BED**  
Rattlestick

**HAND TO GOD**  
Booth

**THE KING AND I**  
Vivian Beaumont

**LAUGH IT UP, STARE IT  
DOWN**  
Cherry Lane. Through  
Oct. 10.

**THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA  
MCBRIDE**  
Lucille Lortel. Through  
Oct. 11.

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S  
DREAM**  
Pearl

**OLD TIMES**  
American Airlines Theatre

**PERFECT ARRANGEMENT**  
The Duke on 42nd Street

**REREAD ANOTHER**  
The Brick

**SOMETHING ROTTEN!**  
St. James

**SOMMERFUGL**  
4th Street Theatre.  
Through Oct. 10.

## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### The Alcoholic Movie Musical!

The musician and performance artist Cynthia Hopkins created this metatheatrical evening of comedy and live filmmaking. In previews. Opens Oct. 9. (The Bushwick Starr, 207 Starr St., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111.)

### Allegiance

Lea Salonga and George Takei star in a musical based on Takei's childhood experiences in Japanese-American internment camps, written by Marc Acito, Jay Kuo, and Lorenzo Thione. Stafford Arima directs. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Barbecue

In a new play by Robert O'Hara ("Bootycandy"), directed by Kent Gash, a group of siblings gather in a park to confront their sister about her drug abuse. In previews. Opens Oct. 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### Clever Little Lies

Marlo Thomas stars in Joe DiPietro's comedy, directed by David Saint, as a woman trying to figure out what went wrong during a tennis match between her husband and her son. In previews. Opens Oct. 12. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

### Dames at Sea

An homage to nineteen-thirties musical comedy, first produced Off Broadway in 1968, with a book and lyrics by George Haimsohn and Robin Miller and music by Jim Wise. Randy Skinner directs. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Eclipsed

Lupita Nyong'o ("12 Years a Slave") stars in Danai Gurira's play, directed by Liesl Tommy, about the captive wives of a rebel officer during Liberia's second civil war. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### First Daughter Suite

Michael John LaChiusa's new musical imagines the inner lives of Julie Nixon Eisenhower, Patti Davis, Barbara Bush, and other Presidential daughters. With Rachel Bay Jones, Mary Testa, and Barbara Walsh. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### Fool for Love

In Sam Shepard's play, directed by Daniel Aukin for Manhattan Theatre Club, Nina Arianda and Sam Rockwell play brawling ex-lovers at a motel in the Mojave Desert. In previews. Opens Oct. 8. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Futurity

Sarah Benson directs a new musical by César Alvarez and his indie band, the Lisps, in which a Civil War soldier and a mathematical genius try

to invent a machine that will create utopia. In previews. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

### The Gin Game

In D. L. Coburn's Pulitzer Prize-winning play from 1976, directed by Leonard Foglia, James Earl Jones and Cicely Tyson play two nursing-home residents who square off in gin rummy. In previews. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### The Humans

Joe Mantello directs a drama by Stephen Karam ("Sons of the Prophet"), about a man who brings his family to celebrate Thanksgiving at his daughter's dilapidated apartment. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

### Kill Floor

LCT3 presents a new play by Abe Kogler, directed by Lila Neugebauer, in which an ex-con (Marin Ireland) finds work at a slaughterhouse and tries to reconnect with her teen-age son, a staunch vegetarian. In previews. (Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

### King Charles III

Tim Pigott-Smith stars in Mike Bartlett's speculative play in blank verse, directed by Rupert Goold, which imagines Prince Charles's ascent to the British throne. Previews begin Oct. 10. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### New Society

The performance artist, author, and filmmaker Miranda July stages a new participatory piece at the Next Wave Festival. Oct. 7-10. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

### On Your Feet!

Jerry Mitchell directs a new biographical musical about the lives and careers of Gloria and Emilio Estefan, with choreography by Sergio Trujillo. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

### Ripcord

Marylouise Burke and Holland Taylor star in a new comedy by David Lindsay-Abaire, directed by David Hyde Pierce for Manhattan Theatre Club, about two women in assisted living who are forced to share a room. In previews. (City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### Romance Language

Carl Andress directs Joe Godfrey's play, in which a well-to-do Manhattan widow strikes up an affair with her Italian instructor. Previews begin Oct. 13. (Theatre 511 at Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 866-811-4111.)

### Rothschild & Sons

Robert Cuccioli plays the patriarch of the Rothschild banking dynasty, in a new version of the 1970 musical "The Rothschilds," by Jerry Bock,

Sheldon Harnick, and Sherman Yellen. In previews. (York Theatre at St. Peter's, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-935-5820.)

### Sisters' Follies: Between Two Worlds

The puppeteer Basil Twist stages this musical ghost story, featuring Joey Arias and Julie Atlas Muz as the real-life sisters who founded the Abrons Playhouse, a century ago, and are now back to haunt it. Opens Oct. 7. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101.)

### Sylvia

Annaleigh Ashford, Matthew Broderick, and Julie White star in Daniel Sullivan's revival of the A. R. Gurney comedy, about a New York couple and their dog. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Thérèse Raquin

Keira Knightley makes her Broadway debut in Helen Edmundson's adaptation of the Émile Zola novel, in which a woman in a loveless marriage enters a torrid and murderous affair with her husband's friend. Evan Cabnet directs the Roundabout production. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

### Ugly Lies the Bone

Mamie Gummer stars in Lindsey Ferrentino's drama, directed by Patricia McGregor, about a burn victim returning home from a military tour in Afghanistan. In previews. Opens Oct. 13. (Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

### Would You Still Love Me If ...

Kathleen Turner directs John S. Anastasi's play, in which Turner plays the mother of a woman who is wrestling with her gender identity. In previews. Opens Oct. 10. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

## NOW PLAYING

### Daddy Long Legs

If there were a word for a play so predictable you could write the finale while watching the opening scene, it would perfectly describe John Caird and Paul Gordon's sweetly plodding epistolary musical. Based on a 1912 novel, this two-hander follows Jerusha (Megan McGinnis), a plucky orphan, who receives a generous college scholarship from an anonymous orphanage trustee (Paul Alexander Nolan). From her new dorm room, Jerusha writes heartfelt missives to the benefactor she's nicknamed Daddy Long Legs, displaying a fascination with his age and appearance that would be odd if he really were the spindly eighty-three-year-old she apparently imagines. Not likely: he's young and handsome, of course, and he's the one who gets the real education—about

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friendship, honesty, and love. But, despite charming, spirited performances from McGinnis and Nolan, the piece offers little such edification to its spectators. (Davenport, 354 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

## Fulfillment

Thomas Bradshaw is a prolific playwright, and part of what makes him interesting is that he writes about black maleness without making it all about sociology or special pleading. His latest work tells the story of Michael (the sexy and fantastic Gbenga Akinagbe), a lawyer who buys an expensive apartment in SoHo. Michael tries to ignore the racist world, which he copes with by consuming large quantities of liquor, sometimes in the company of his girlfriend, Sarah (the appropriately lewd Susannah Flood), who helps him get sober—at least for a time. Despite Sarah's patience, she's as self-interested as the guys Michael surrounds himself with, and when his twisted upstairs neighbor, Simon (Christian Conn, good and nasty), makes Michael's urban dream a nightmare we see how little truth or love lies in anyone's heart. Well directed by Ethan McSweeney, the piece is not one of Bradshaw's best—it's too schematic—but it's still more upsetting and hilarious than many of his contemporaries' more popular work. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

## The New Morality

The playwright Harold Chapin, born in Brooklyn and raised in London, died a hundred years ago, in the Battle of Loos. This play, first produced shortly after his death, is an unabashed comedy with bite. Set on a houseboat on the Thames in the historically hot summer of 1911, the action stems from some very public insults that Betty Jones (Brenda Meaney) hurls at her next-door neighbor on the river. With this seemingly trivial outburst, Chapin examines not only emotional issues but also the rapidly changing role of women in Edwardian society. Jonathan Bank directs the fine cast with the right balance of thoughtfulness and silliness. Meaney is wonderful in the central role, showing consummate humor, feeling, and intelligence. But, in a surprising twist, the play-

wright puts his theme in the mouth of a drunken upper-class twit, and Ned Noyes nails the big scene. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111.)

## The Quare Land

A County Cavan farmhouse set revolves to reveal the ninety-year-old Hugh Pugh (Peter Maloney) in the bathtub of a filthy attic, immersed in bubbles and the music of Bobby Darin. His solitary soak is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Rob McNulty (Rufus Collins), a builder who has a proposition, though it takes the younger man some time to reveal its nature, as Hugh spins out a nearly continuous verbal string of history, fantasy, song, invective, and politics. John McManus's ninety-minute play, directed by Ciarán O'Reilly, contains elements of vaudeville, absurdism, and Pinteresque uncertainty—and is a little uneven for all that—but its reversals bring big laughs as well as discomfiting menace. Cementing his position as one of the stage's great comedians, Maloney fully embodies the playwright's serio-comic vision of the Irish character: loquacious, shrewd, stubborn, and quite mad. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-727-2737.)

## Spring Awakening

In 2006, Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater translated Frank Wedekind's fin-de-siècle German drama, about teen-agers discovering their sexuality in a pious and ignorant society, into the explosive language of indie rock. Deaf West Theatre adds another layer of translation in its stirring and imaginative revival, directed by Michael Arden and featuring a mixed cast of deaf and hearing actors. Now Melchior (the fresh-faced Austin P. McKenzie) signs as he sings, and Wendla, his young lover, is played by two performers, one who signs (Sandra Mae Frank) and one who sings and plays the guitar in the shadows (Katie Boeck). While this disembodied effect drains some of the rock numbers of their cathartic power, the signing doubles exquisitely as choreography and heightens one of the show's subtler themes: that language—sexual or otherwise—will find a way, even in a fearful, repressive world. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 877-250-2929.)



# DANCE

## New York City Ballet

The two programs on Oct. 10-11 give a sense of the breadth of the vast catalogue of George Balanchine: on Saturday, high modernism ("The Four Temperaments") is paired with crisp neo-classicism ("Concerto Barocco"). On Sunday, the double bill includes one of Balanchine's lushest, most Romantic works ("Liebeslieder Walzer") and one of the most classical ("Theme and Variations"). An American program (Oct. 7) includes a rarity: "Sonatas and Interludes," a ballet set to music by John Cage for "prepared" piano, by Richard Tanner. The twenty-first-century bill (Oct. 8-9) introduces "Jeux," a new work by the veteran Danish choreographer Kim Brandstrup, set to Debussy's 1912 ballet score. • Oct. 7 at 7:30: "Ash," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Tarentella,"

"Rodeo: Four Dance Episodes," and "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue." • Oct. 8 at 7:30 and Oct. 9 at 8: "Common Ground," "The Blue of Distance," "Polaris," "New Blood," and "Jeux." • Oct. 10 at 2 and 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Episodes," and "The Four Temperaments." • Oct. 11 at 3: "Liebeslieder Walzer" and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." • Oct. 13 at 7:30: "Harlequinade" and "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through Oct. 18.)

## Fall for Dance Festival

The festival returns with its winning formula: eclectic evenings in which vastly different styles of dance rub elbows at the unbeatable price of fifteen dollars. The remaining programs include

hip-hop, Indian dance, flamenco, ballet, and modern dance, with a few difficult-to-define collaborations thrown into the mix. One of these hybrids, on the final program, is a touching duet that plays with the theme of youth and experience; it will be performed by the clown and actor Bill Irwin and the gamine ballerina Tiler Peck. See citycenter.org for full programs. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Oct. 6-11.)

#### Aparna Ramaswamy

The light-footed bharata-natyam dancer Ramaswamy, based in Minneapolis—where she runs Ragamala Dance Company with her mother (also a bharata-natyam dancer)—comes to the Joyce. Her evening-length work “They Rose at Dawn” consists of a series of interconnected solos, combining pure, rhythmically driven movement and mimed storytelling, which explore the many facets of womanhood. A musical ensemble will play live Carnatic music, a melodic classical style from southern India. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 6-8.)

#### Seán Curran Company

On a State Department-sponsored tour of Central Asia, Curran and his dancers met the members of Ustatshakirt Plus, an ensemble of Kyrgyz folk musicians. The fruit of that cultural exchange is “Dream’d in a Dream.” The title derives from Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass,” a favorite of Ustatshakirt’s director, and the dance, with fellowship and love as robust as the mountain music, reflects the poetry in spirit. (BAM’s Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Oct. 7-10.)

#### Ponydance

This Irish troupe specializes in silly fun. For “Anybody Waitin’?”—returning in Abrons Arts Center’s “Travelogues” series after a short run at La Mama in 2013—the setting is a night club. Two women, out for a girls’ night, are joined by two gay guys. The four perform absurdly tacky dances in absurdly tacky outfits and rope audience members into compromising situations. (466 Grand St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 7-10.)

#### Jonah Bokaer

The theme of the Onassis Cultural Center’s first festival is “Narcissus Now: The Myth Reimagined,” and Bokaer, whose recent work has addressed myths and the Mediterranean, is a natural fit. His “Triple Echo” ignores the tale’s self-absorbed figure and focusses instead on the nymph he rejects. In an atrium complete with a waterfall and a pool, Bokaer stages solos for three striking women: Hristoula Harakas, Sara Procopio, and Mata Sakka. The score, by the Greek composer Stavros Gasparatos, scatters a female voice, disembodied like Echo’s, through multichannel speakers amid a live string quartet. (645 Fifth Ave., at 51st St. 212-486-4448. Oct. 8.)

#### Dance Heginbotham

When John Heginbotham was in the Mark Morris Dance Group, the pianist Ethan Iverson was the company’s music director and sometimes played for classes. The two men now draw on that experience for “Easy Win.” Iverson, best known for his jazz trio the Bad Plus, performs his own witty compositions while Heginbotham’s dancers have some intricate, eccentric fun with classroom conventions. “Angels’ Share,” Heginbotham’s first crack at ballet, which premiered on Atlanta Ballet earlier this year, gets a company première, with its score, a string trio by Erno Dohnányi, also played live. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 10-11.)

## ABOVE & BEYOND

#### “Celebrate!! Amiri Baraka”

The poet, author, and playwright Amiri Baraka, who died last year, will be remembered in a tribute concert in his home town of Newark. Baraka’s contributions as an artist, an advocate for African-American art, and a member of the local community (his son is now mayor of Newark) are reflected in the lineup. The longtime ABC reporter Art McFarland will read an excerpt from “The Most Dangerous Man in America,” Baraka’s last play, about the government investigation of W.E.B. Du Bois. Artists and activists, including the Grammy-winning R. & B. musician James Mtume, the poet-politician Felipe Luciano, and the poet-publisher Jessica Care Moore, will perform and discuss the impact of Baraka’s work. (Newark Symphony Hall, 1030 Broad St., Newark, N.J. 973-643-8014. Oct. 10 at 8.)

#### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Far from representing objective reality, the photographs in Sotheby’s Oct. 7 auction tell us as much about the men and women who took them as they do about their subjects. Consider Alfred

Stieglitz’s platinum print “November Days,” from 1886, with skeletal trees framing a dusty northern-European road, travelled by a lonely horse carriage—the work of man who believed that “atmosphere is the medium through which we see all things.” Or Lewis Carroll’s series of portraits of little Alexandra (Xie) Kitchin, wearing a fur hat or a peasant dress—the ambiguous projections of an Oxford don obsessed with childhood. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • **Phillips** rolls out two sales of photographs on Oct. 8. In the morning, the house presents a private collection assembled over three decades, including works by Frank (“London, 1951”), Friedlander (“New Orleans, 1973”), and Eggleston (“Sumner, Mississippi, 1969-1971”). A more general sale follows, later in the day. (450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.)

#### READINGS AND TALKS

##### The Graduate Center at CUNY

Jonathan Burnham, the senior vice-president and publisher of HarperCollins, discusses the discovery and publication of Harper Lee’s controversial long-lost novel, “Go Set a Watchman.” He is joined by the *New Yorker* staff writer Joan Acocella and by Tuzyline Allan, an English professor at Baruch College. (365 Fifth Ave. gc.cuny.edu/public-programming. Oct. 7 at 7.)

##### Community Bookstore

The Jamaican author Marlon James appears with Rob Spillman, the editor of *Tin House*, to discuss James’s book “A Brief History of Seven Killings,” which imagines an attempted assassination of Bob Marley in 1976. The novel has been short-listed for this year’s Man Booker Prize. (143 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn. communitybookstore.net. Oct. 7 at 7.)



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# X MOVIES



Applicants for public assistance face complex rules and gruff caseworkers in the 1975 documentary "Welfare."

## SPREADING THE NEWS

*Frederick Wiseman's documentaries probe New York institutions.*

**MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE's** series "Frederick Wiseman's New York" (Oct. 9–Nov. 7) spotlights seven features that the Boston-based documentary filmmaker made in this city between 1969 and 1994. (His ninth New York film, "In Jackson Heights," will be released next month; an earlier one, "The Garden," has never been released.) New York has inspired some of Wiseman's best work, because the city itself embodies some of his crucial ideas.

Wiseman filmed "Welfare" (Oct. 11), released in 1975, in municipal offices where people who applied for financial assistance are interviewed by caseworkers. The movie is a symphony of New York voices—a time capsule of accents and tones—as well as of faces, which, in Wiseman's probing, empathetic closeups, reflect the clamor and the complexity of the city at large. He displays a paradoxical system that's troubling politically, as well as psychologically, especially in the conflict it sparks between personal experience and objective rules.

Questioned by caseworkers whose attitudes vary from deeply sympathetic to sharply cynical, the applicants often can't respond as required. They range from being startlingly self-revealing to seemingly deceptive to overwhelmed by fear or despair; some suffer from mental illness, and others are gripped by hunger, anger, or frustration. The system turns applicants and officials alike into performers, and the mighty passions and high stakes render these performances extravagant and moving. The stories that emerge are distilled into papers that mount in overflowing stacks of files on clerks' desks, like scripts for thousands of real-life movies of an electric intensity, of which Wiseman's tragically absorbing nearly three-hour documentary is just a sample. New York itself, in its scale and its pressure, is dramatized in the movie's every confrontation.

In "Central Park" (Oct. 25), from 1989, Wiseman unfolds the institutional debates and administrative conflicts behind the glorious settings of one of the city's defining places. He displays the Park's range of comedies and dramas, from the New York City Marathon to political rallies, from the furtive rest of the homeless to illicit off-path cycling, romance, and drug dealing. The movie's crucial story is the Park's restoration by way of private funds. Wiseman goes into boardrooms and living rooms to observe city officials and leaders of the Central Park Conservancy debate matters of fund-raising, law enforcement, and urban planning, ultimately uncovering, at a meeting of donors in a posh apartment, traces of a political crisis that's now in the foreground: the pervasive distrust of government on the part of the wealthiest citizens.

In "Hospital," from 1969 (Oct. 10), a documentary forerunner of "The Knick," Wiseman shows the gruesome wonders of medical science in a turbulent urban setting. With extraordinary access to trauma centers and operating rooms in Manhattan's Metropolitan Hospital, he finds doctors saving lives with methods that require a strong stomach to witness. The film presents the human element of medicine—including the medical effects of urban life—and the seemingly superhuman contact with organs and wounds, which seems to put doctors in a world apart.

—Richard Brody



## NOW PLAYING

### Black Mass

Bowing to the principle that there can never be enough films about criminal fraternities, Scott Cooper's new movie takes us to Boston in the nineteen-seventies, where James Bulger (Johnny Depp), known as Whitey, runs the Winter Hill Gang. He holds sway for almost twenty years, and in that time he grows dangerously close to the F.B.I., for whom he becomes (though he would never use the word) a rat. In return, the agency—in particular an agent named John Connolly (Joel Edgerton), who hails from the same neighborhood—gives him all the leeway that he needs. The movie is a demonstration of power, with brawny roles for Jesse Plemons and Rory Cochrane, as Whitey's sidekicks, and a sly turn from Benedict Cumberbatch, as his brother—a state senator, no less. But much of the drama seems to occur in a vacuum, with nobody filling the rooms and the streets except gangsters and lawmen, as if their pacts and standoffs were an elaborate game; the result is rarely as frightening as it hopes to be. Depp, tricked out with blue eyes and straw-pale hair, throws everything at the leading role, but are we watching a warped force of nature, as was certainly the case with the real Bulger, or an acting master class? With Julianne Nicholson and Dakota Johnson.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/28/15.) (In wide release.)

### The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution

This documentary, directed by Stanley Nelson, will be a useful primer for anyone unschooled in the story of the Black Panthers, although their look, their impact, and their raison d'être remain lodged with surprising tenacity in the public mind. We hear of the birth of the movement in Oakland, California, and of the speed with which its militant message spread to the North, in contrast with the more equable, church-grounded toil for civil rights in the Southern states. We are presented with the leading players, including Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver, and with the disputes that would, later on, so bitterly divide them. (At the F.B.I., as the film shows, J. Edgar Hoover, who viewed the Panthers as a menace to society, noted this dissent with satisfaction and let them tear each other apart.) The movie is hardly the most objective of accounts, but fieriness is part of its appeal, stoked by the songs on the soundtrack and sustained by a belief that the grievances aired at the time remain unresolved.—*A.L.* (9/7/15) (In limited release.)

### Coming Home

The director Zhang Yimou's calculatedly poignant drama depicts a Chinese family torn apart in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of the late fifties, driven deeper into despair by the Cultural Revolution, and uneasily reassembled in the late-seventies thaw. Lu (Chen Daoming), a former professor sent to a labor camp for "rightism," escapes from custody and makes his way back to the family home that he shared with his wife, Feng (Gong Li), a teacher; and their daughter, Dandan (Zhang Huiwen), whom he hasn't seen since she was three. But Dandan, a ballet dancer imbued with Communist Party doctrine, rejects him, leading to his recapture. When he's ultimately freed, he returns to Feng but finds her afflicted with dementia. Zhang's smoothly efficient direction milks the melodrama for intimate emotion, conjuring the bad old days with varnished surfaces that give unspeakable suffering a halcyon glow. The drama of Feng's failing memory involves a bitter twist of corruption and hypocrisy, but the Party's ulti-

mate benevolence remains unquestioned. Zhang's rueful sentiment bears a whiff of the official. In Mandarin.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

### Death Becomes Her

Robert Zemeckis's duelling-diva comedy, from 1992, stars Meryl Streep as a Broadway and Hollywood superstar, Goldie Hawn as the high-school chum who reappears in her life as a svelte, media-hyped author, and Bruce Willis as the man they both desire, a gifted plastic surgeon who turns alcoholic and becomes a mortuary makeup artist. At the film's peak, Zemeckis, the cast, and the special-effects team achieve a deluxe, macabre slapstick. In passing, the movie comments on the Beverly Hills cult of youth and beauty, but the script, by Martin Donovan and David Koepp, which pivots on an immortality potion, is basically an excuse for Streep and Hawn to wallop each other with the aid of flesh-bending special effects. The dialogue is flat, and the narrative invention is pitiful. Willis musters a fine, beaten air as a love-struck schlub, and Hawn proves that a comedian can be infectiously funny even as a woefully depressed character. The best reason to see the film is Streep. She deliriously sends up the kind of show-biz narcissist who can turn a pelvic tilt into an expression of self-love. In this movie about women losing control of their bodies, she seems more at home in hers than ever before.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Oct. 8 and Oct. 10.)

### Everest

Since his debut film, the spirited and lusty "101 Reykjavík" (2000), the Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur has come a long way. Specifically, he has gone upward—into higher budgets and grander themes, and now to the roof of the world. Most of his new movie takes place on and around the mountain of the title, where two groups of climbers, one led by Rob Hall (Jason Clarke) and the other by Scott Fischer (Jake Gyllenhaal), join forces in an attempt on the summit. Against them is a gathering storm, a shrinking window of time, and the fact that most of the mountaineers are paying customers who will settle for nothing less than a view from the top. Vertiginous viewers may want to close their eyes as the heights and depths, rendered yet more pitiless by 3-D, begin to stretch and yawn. The cast, which includes John Hawkes, Josh Brolin, Emily Watson, Keira Knightley, Sam Worthington, and Robin Wright, could hardly be stronger, yet that very strength compounds the feeling that, however implacable the icy blasts of the film, and however stirring its account of human endurance, we are never quite sure where the heart of the story lies.—*A.L.* (9/28/15) (In wide release.)

### For the Plasma

This exquisitely delusional comedy, co-directed by Bingham Bryant (who wrote the script) and Kyle Molzan, delivers a dry New England strain of crazy. Its mainspring is the metaphysics of vision and the maddening quest for meaning; its subject is the pit of friendship. Two young women live in an isolated house in a seaside village in Maine: Helen (Rosalie Lowe), a forest-fire surveillance officer, and her old friend and new assistant, Charlie (Anabelle LeMieux). Helen bases supernatural stock-market predictions on the video feed with which she monitors the woods, and she seeks Charlie's help in taking them to the next level. Paranoid moods emerge from Helen's incantatory remarks and occult doodles on a newspaper's financial pages, as well as from Charlie's encounters with surveillance cameras in the wild. Then Herbert (Tom Lloyd), a crusty old

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## OPENING

### THE FORBIDDEN ROOM

A fantasy, directed by Guy Maddin and Evan Johnson, about a submarine crew that is trapped undersea. Opening Oct. 7. (Film Forum.)

### KNOCK KNOCK

A thriller, starring Keanu Reeves as a married man who gets into trouble when he lets two young women (Lorenza Izzo and Ana de Armas) into his home. Directed by Eli Roth. Opening Oct. 9. (In limited release.)

### PAN

This prequel to the story of Peter Pan explains how he arrived in Neverland. Directed by Joe Wright; starring Levi Miller, Hugh Jackman, and Rooney Mara. Opening Oct. 9. (In wide release.)

### STEVE JOBS

A bio-pic about the co-founder of Apple, starring Michael Fassbender. Directed by Danny Boyle; co-starring Kate Winslet and Seth Rogen. Opening Oct. 9. (In wide release.)

## REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

*Titles in bold are reviewed.*

### ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

Special screening. Oct. 13 at 7:30: **"For the Plasma,"** followed by a discussion with the directors, Bingham Bryant and Kyle Molzan.

### FILM FORUM

In revival. Oct. 9-29 (call for showtimes): **"Rocco and His Brothers."**

### FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The New York Film Festival. Oct. 6-7 at 6: **"In the Shadow of Women."** • Oct. 7 at 6: "No Home Movie" (2015, Chantal Akerman). • Oct. 8 at 6: "Heart of a Dog" (2015, Laurie Anderson). • Oct. 9 at 6 and Oct. 10 at 2: "Carol" (2015, Todd Haynes). • Oct. 9 at 6: **"The Treasure."** • Oct. 9 at 9 and Oct. 10 at 3:30: **"Right Now, Wrong Then."** • Oct. 10 at 6, 6:15, 9, and 9:15: "Miles Ahead" (2015, Don Cheadle).



### MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Blake Edwards's "Experiment in Terror," from 1962, in our digital edition and online.

neighbor and lighthouse keeper, shows up, his off-key solitude as tempting as the abyss. The movie's visual prose, aided by simple but fanciful camera work, has an original, giddy spin; Bryant and Molzan's smooth and floaty direction sublimates the rocky landscape into something disturbingly ethereal.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Oct. 13.)

### In the Shadow of Women

In Philippe Garrel's new drama, the clenched anguish of dual romantic triangles is raised to lyrical grandeur by an infusion of art and history. A thirty-something couple in Paris, Pierre (Stanislas Merhar) and Manon (Clotilde Courau), share poverty in harmony; Pierre is a documentary filmmaker, Manon is his editor, and they're making a film about the French Resistance. While doing archival research, Pierre meets Elisabeth (Léna Paugam), a graduate student in history, with whom he begins a sexually intense relationship; Manon, sensing Pierre's remoteness, has an affair with an earnest young businessman named Fédor (Mounir Margoum), and their marital crisis also becomes a cinematic one. Garrel puts the past to work in the present tense, depicting Pierre and Manon beside elderly Second World War veterans and ancient Parisian buildings, while a novelistic voice-over analyzes the action with keen psychological insight. In the high-contrast, black-and-white, wide-screen images, Garrel captures creative and erotic passions with a spontaneous classicism and a monumental poise. In French.—*R.B.* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 6-7.)

### The Intern

This earnest, effusive haut-bourgeois fantasy, by the writer and director Nancy Meyers, runs roughshod over rational skepticism with the force of her life experience. It's set in the overlap of two generations of Brooklyn businesspeople. Jules (Anne Hathaway) has built an Internet start-up from zero to booming in eighteen months, but the pace of her passionately hands-on management style is straining her marriage to Matt (Anders Holm), a stay-at-home dad. Into Jules's stylishly renovated Red Hook offices skips a fairy godfather named Ben (Robert De Niro), a retired executive and lonely widower who arrives as one of the company's "senior interns." Jules, under pressure from investors to yield control of the company, increasingly relies on the wise, discreet, and admiring volunteer, who becomes a key presence in her business and her household alike. For all the nostalgic riffs about styles and virtues forged before the Age of Aquarius, the movie's real subject is the sentimental union of seeming enemies, the disruptive young entrepreneur and the old-school company man. Meyers, an insider's insider, dispenses her vision of feminism—



A new restoration of Luchino Visconti's grand-scale family melodrama, from 1960, starring Alain Delon and Annie Girardot, screens Oct. 9-29 at Film Forum.

and of independence—via the man in the gray flannel suit.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

### The Long Voyage Home

One of the finest of all the movies that deal with life at sea, and one of the most successful of all attempts to put Eugene O'Neill on film—perhaps because the director, John Ford, and the screenwriter, Dudley Nichols, were so free in their approach to O'Neill's material. The young Mildred Natwick has a memorable scene in a café with John Wayne, and Barry Fitzgerald's return to the ship (shrunken and chastened) is a truly great moment. Gregg Toland did the cinematography (which includes some early experiments in deep focus); with Thomas Mitchell, Wilfrid Lawson, Ward Bond, John Qualen, and Joe Sawyer. Released in 1940.—*Pauline Kael* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 7.)

### Mississippi Grind

Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck's faux-hearty picaresque tale, about two gamblers on a road trip from Iowa to New Orleans, strains after atmosphere and only feigns a shaggy-dog free-spiritedness. Gerry (Ben

Mendelsohn), a high-stakes poker player on a losing streak, who is deep in debt to tough creditors, thinks that a loosey-goosey cohort, Curtis (Ryan Reynolds), whom he meets at a gaming table, will change his luck. In their travels, they meet two clichéd whores with hearts of gold (Sienna Miller and Analeigh Tipton). Meanwhile, Gerry tries to reconnect with his ex-wife (Robin Weigert), and along the way they strive for the brass ring and keep coming up short. There's poetic nihilism in the self-punishment of Gerry's foolhardy risks and desperate rants, but it merely hints at the tougher-minded movie that Boden and Fleck shy away from. Under their direction, Mendelsohn tips his hand, and Reynolds channels the hangdog machismo of another cinematic Ryan—namely, Gosling. The actors flaunt craft, the script lays on the folksiness with a trowel, and scenes of local color seem to come straight from a guidebook.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### 99 Homes

A simplistic but stirring morality play centered on the pressure point of the savings-and-loan crisis. Michael



Shannon plays the Devil incarnate—Rick Carver, a Realtor in Orlando, Florida, who brings his own team of movers along with the police so that he can evict residents and remove their belongings in one trip in order to resell their houses at a profit. Dennis Nash (Andrew Garfield), a construction worker who lives with his mother (Laura Dern) and young son (Noah Lomax), gets evicted by Rick, but also gets recruited by him to assist him in the foreclosure racket; hoping to earn back his house, Dennis accepts the Faustian bargain. Rick is soon revealed to be an actual criminal with elaborate schemes of theft and fraud, but his swagger, bravado, chicanery, and varieties of hedonism mark his villainy even more overtly than his actions do. The sympathies of any sane viewer are locked in from the start; most of the movie is sheer emotional overkill. The director, Ramin Bahrani, admits of no ambiguity, but, despite his apparent intentions, his depiction of real-estate scams is more engaging than the drama. The Devil gets the best lines.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Pawn Sacrifice

A flawed yet entertaining docudrama about an irresistible subject: the 1972 world-championship chess match between Bobby Fischer (played by Tobey Maguire) and Boris Spassky (Liev Schreiber). The movie starts with a dramatic moment at the tournament site in Reykjavík—Fischer's nonappearance for the second game. The ensuing flashbacks show Fischer's childhood in Brooklyn, where he was raised by a single mother (Robin Weigert) who was an active Communist and who aroused McCarthyite snooping, and his subsequent rise through a chess establishment that treated him with indifference and even hostility. Obsessed with wresting the championship from Soviet players, Fischer fears K.G.B. plots; ultimately, psychotic delusions take hold of his personality, but not before he wins the championship. The lawyer Paul Marshall (Michael Stuhlbarg) works behind the scenes to get covert government aid for Fischer; the chess master and priest William Lombardy (Peter Sarsgaard) helps Fischer prepare for the match while admiring his artistry with a connoisseur's eye. The drama, directed by Edward Zwick, takes liberties with the story and shears off some noteworthy details, but despite the rigid yet slapdash filmmaking the movie conveys the fascination and mystery of a tormented genius at work.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

### Right Now, Wrong Then

The South Korean director Hong Sang-soo doubles the emotional stakes of this cinemacentric romance by doubling the drama itself. It's the story of a youngish director, Ham Chunsu (Jeong Jae-yeong), who has a day to kill before introducing his work at a festival in the town of Suwon. Visiting a shrine, he meets Heejung (Kim Min-hee), a young artist, who invites him to her studio. There, he expresses an interest in her work—and in her body as well. But in the epic drinking bout that follows he admits to her that he's married. For an hour, Hong follows the ups and downs of their incipient relationship—and then he does it again, starting the story over from scratch and showing what Ham and Heejung could have done differently. Either hour alone would be a wry, incisive, quietly painful drama, set at the intersection of art and life, about foregrounded action and the weight of personal history. Together, the two parts make a radical fiction about the crucial role of imagination in lived experience. Hong's narrative gamesmanship reveals agonized regret.—*R.B.* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 9-10.)

### Rocco and His Brothers

Luchino Visconti's strange sprawling epic, from 1960, is a flamboyant melodrama about how a poor Sicilian family (a mother and her five sons) is corrupted and eventually destroyed by life in Milan. Visconti's methods are still partly neorealist, but the scale of the film is huge and operatic, and it loses the intimacy of the best neorealist films, and their breath of life. This is more like a hollow, spectacular version of a Warners movie of the thirties (three of the sons take turns in the prizefight ring), but the characters aren't as vivid and individualized as the Warners actors made them. The movie is memorable largely because of Annie Girardot's stunning performance as a prostitute; her role suggests that of Dostoyevsky's great heroine in "The Idiot," while her final scene suggests Büchner's "Woyzeck." (There are also suggestions of the Biblical story of Joseph and his brethren.) The weirdest aspect of the film is the casting of Alain Delon (who at times seems to be lighted as if he were Hedy Lamarr) as a saintly, simple Prince Myshkin. Renato Salvatori plays the most forceful of the brothers—it's actually his sexual passion, rather than the horrors of urban existence, that destroys the family. In Italian.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Oct. 9-29.)

### The Second Mother

In this carefully observed but schematic drama, the housekeeper in a prosperous São Paulo household, Val (Regina Casé), is the stereotypical rock of the family. She provides warmth and stability amid the neurotic egotism of her employers, Bárbara (Karine Teles), a TV personality, and her husband, Carlos (Lourenço Mutarelli), a former artist who spends most of his time in bed. They're both too distracted to pay much attention to their spoiled teen-age son, Fabinho (Michel Joelsas), who is virtually raised by Val. But when Jessica (Camila Márdina), Val's ambitious, audacious, and intellectual daughter, arrives from a rural province to take a college entrance exam, Val's employers welcome her as a guest. Jessica quickly overturns the well-to-do family's routines and pierces its façade of contentment. The writer and director, Anna Muylaert, lets Casé ham it up as Val, who bustles about the house in a tumult of emotionalism without any hidden impulses or desires to fuel it; the characters' pigeonholed social roles display Muylaert's intentions from the start and render the drama superfluous. In Portuguese.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Sicario

A young F.B.I. agent, Kate Macer (Emily Blunt), based at the frontier between America and Mexico, joins a new outfit that's devoted to nailing the men who run the drug cartels. The team, which includes the cheerful Matt (Josh Brolin, in flip-flops) and the more mournful Alejandro (Benicio Del Toro), appears to have free rein—much to the dismay of Kate, who cleaves to the rule of law. Many blundering and noisy thrillers have been forged from such a setup, but the director here is Denis Villeneuve, and so the mood, even during exchanges of gunfire, is never less than ominous and fraught. Whether it suits Blunt, with her natural play of wit, is open to question, whereas Del Toro, allowing us only glimpses of his character's compulsions, thrives amid the gloom. The set pieces are carefully parcelled out: a shootout in a traffic jam, a dark descent into a border tunnel, and the discovery, inside an ordinary house, of corpses filling the walls. Anybody hoping for good news from the front

line of the drug wars should look elsewhere. The director of photography is Roger Deakins: a recommendation in itself.—*A.L.* (9/21/15) (In wide release.)

### Sleeping with Other People

This romantic comedy delivers bland and familiar substance in a peculiar package. In college, the near-strangers Lainey (Alison Brie) and Jake (Jason Sudeikis) lose their virginity to each other and then fall quickly out of touch. Twelve years later, they live in New York; she's a kindergarten teacher, he's a tech-start-up guy, and they reconnect by chance while leaving a group meeting for sex addicts. Lainey and Jake become close friends, supporting each other's efforts to avoid sex, even while it's obvious to viewers that they're falling in love. What Lainey and Jake think is never made clear; the director and writer, Leslye Headland, doesn't get close enough to find out. The premise prompts much talk about sex, most of which is written in screenwriterese, awaiting punctuation by a laugh track. Yet there's pathos in Lainey's disastrous long-term affair with a gynecologist (Adam Scott), and a scene in which Jake teaches Lainey to masturbate suggests a psychodramatic intensity that Headland doesn't reach elsewhere.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### The Treasure

In his earlier films, such as "Police, Adjective," Corneliu Porumboiu showed contemporary Romanians excavating the country's troubled history by means of language. In this mordant caper, he shows them doing so by means of shovels. Negoescu, an unemployed publisher and a member of Bucharest's struggling middle class, asks his neighbor Costi, a low-level housing official, for money to rent a metal detector. Negoescu wants to scan family property in the suburbs; he suspects that his great-grandfather buried valuables there at the time of the Communist takeover in the nineteen-forties. Costi puts up the money, the pair decide to split what they find, and they head to the site with Cornel, the detector's cantankerous owner and operator; under his guidance, they start digging. Stories of nineteenth-century political upheavals adorn Negoescu's family lore, and the property itself, with its multiple layers of modification and renovation, tells tales of historical crises. Filming with long, ironically balanced takes, Porumboiu delivers an ingeniously intricate goofball comedy that evokes heroes of legend while bringing sociological abstractions to mucky life. In Romanian.—*R.B.* (New York Film Festival; Oct. 9.)

### The Visit

For all its intelligence and craft, M. Night Shyamalan's foray into the genre of found-footage horror has the feeling of homework done well. Its fifteen-year-old protagonist, Becca (Olivia DeJonge), a precocious documentary filmmaker, and her thirteen-year-old brother, Tyler (Ed Oxenbould), a nerdy rapper, leave their home in Philadelphia and head to rural Pennsylvania to spend a week with their maternal grandparents, whom they've never met. The teens' mother, played by Kathryn Hahn, eloped at nineteen and never saw her parents again; the movie's found footage is Becca's documentary of the trip, which is meant to reunite the family. However, when the teens meet Nana (Deanna Dunagan) and Pop Pop (Peter McRobbie), they soon discover that things are amiss. The strange and fearsome doings owe nothing to the supernatural; rather, Pop Pop's furtive visits to a lonely shed, Nana's nocturnal wanderings, and the surprising outcome



of a game of hide-and-seek lead to the children's mounting terror. Meanwhile, Becca, armed with a batch of rote theories, continues to make her film. It delivers a few jolts and a few tense laughs, but Shyamalan stays on the surface and at a distance; his script is airtight and, despite deft camera work by Maryse Alberti, he displays no documentary curiosity of his own.—R.B. (In wide release.)

#### War Room

This Christian inspirational drama is anchored by Clara Williams (Karen Abercrombie), an elderly widow in an unnamed town in the South, who wants to sell her house. The real-estate agent who comes for a walk-through, Elizabeth Jordan (Priscilla C. Shirer), mentions trouble with her husband, Tony (T. C. Stallings), and Clara soon

offers her a solution by means of a total commitment to faith and prayer. The movie, directed by Alex Kendrick, blends blandly palliative wish fulfillment and exuberant, nearly possessed fervor. Clara is a sparkplug of brisk energy, whose positive outlook and wry humor are matched by an oratorical extravagance that wouldn't be out of place in a Pentecostal pulpit. The

movie's main characters are black, but race doesn't figure in the action; the story pivots on class divisions, and economic success comes off as the great unifier. Despite Clara's visionary ecstasy, Kendrick's view of Christian devotion involves only trivial sacrifices and offers a gospel of self-help that masks its wider doctrinal implications.—R.B. (In wide release.)



#### TABLES FOR TWO

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IN THE ANNALS OF LOCAL ADVERTISING that's so bad it's good, the Grand Prospect Hall is right up there with Dr. Zizmor and Carmel Car Service. "We make your dreams come true!" the sequinned Alice Halkias, the wife of the suited Michael, says of their conference facility in the South Slope. The famously low-budget spot has, since its TV debut in the mid-eighties, gained a second life on YouTube. The couple stand in front of a red-carpeted staircase, on which, their Web site says, brides can be "flanked by two lines of tuxedoed, white-gloved violinists." As wedding entrances go, it beats tea lights in Mason jars.

John Kolle, a local entrepreneur who wanted a "temple of music and amusement" for Brooklyn society, built the first incarnation of the Hall in 1892. From the very beginning, the building's sheer scale has made it difficult to use properly, and it's been a vaudeville theatre, a movie set, a speakeasy, and a ballroom-dancing venue, and now, on its palatial grounds, there's a German beer garden. Alice and Michael, who speak in thick Greek accents, had in mind an eleven-story hotel, but the neighbors on the largely residential street weren't having it. If there's an element of spite to the endeavor, you'd never know. The experience couldn't be more convivial, with clusters of Erdinger-branded umbrellas, a loud fountain that lights up in violet, and vast, empty spaces in which kids can perfect their cartwheels.

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As for food, the promises are less extravagant. A chalkboard outside says that it will be "satisfying," and it is. In the German way, function trumps form, with three schnitzels for the twenty-four beers on tap, and plenty of simple carbohydrates. The basket of pretzels, however, is "for children," one waiter said, delivering instead an obscenely sized "Uber Soft" variety. Most plates arrive with a clove-heavy sauerkraut and an apple-tinged raw-cabbage salad. Both are fine, as are the jalapeño poppers, though they are not obviously Teutonic. Do not push it with the vegetables. Those who order the pear-and-kale salad, curiously wet, will get what they deserve. The sausage plate is generously portioned, and therefore a triumph. It comes with steak fries the size of a giant's fingers, and should be explored with a porous, noisy group over several hours on a Sunday afternoon, while sitting next to a stuffed horse, a garden gnome, and a lion carved out of imitation limestone. It's not a dream come true, but the scene could accurately be described as dreamy.

—Amelia Lester

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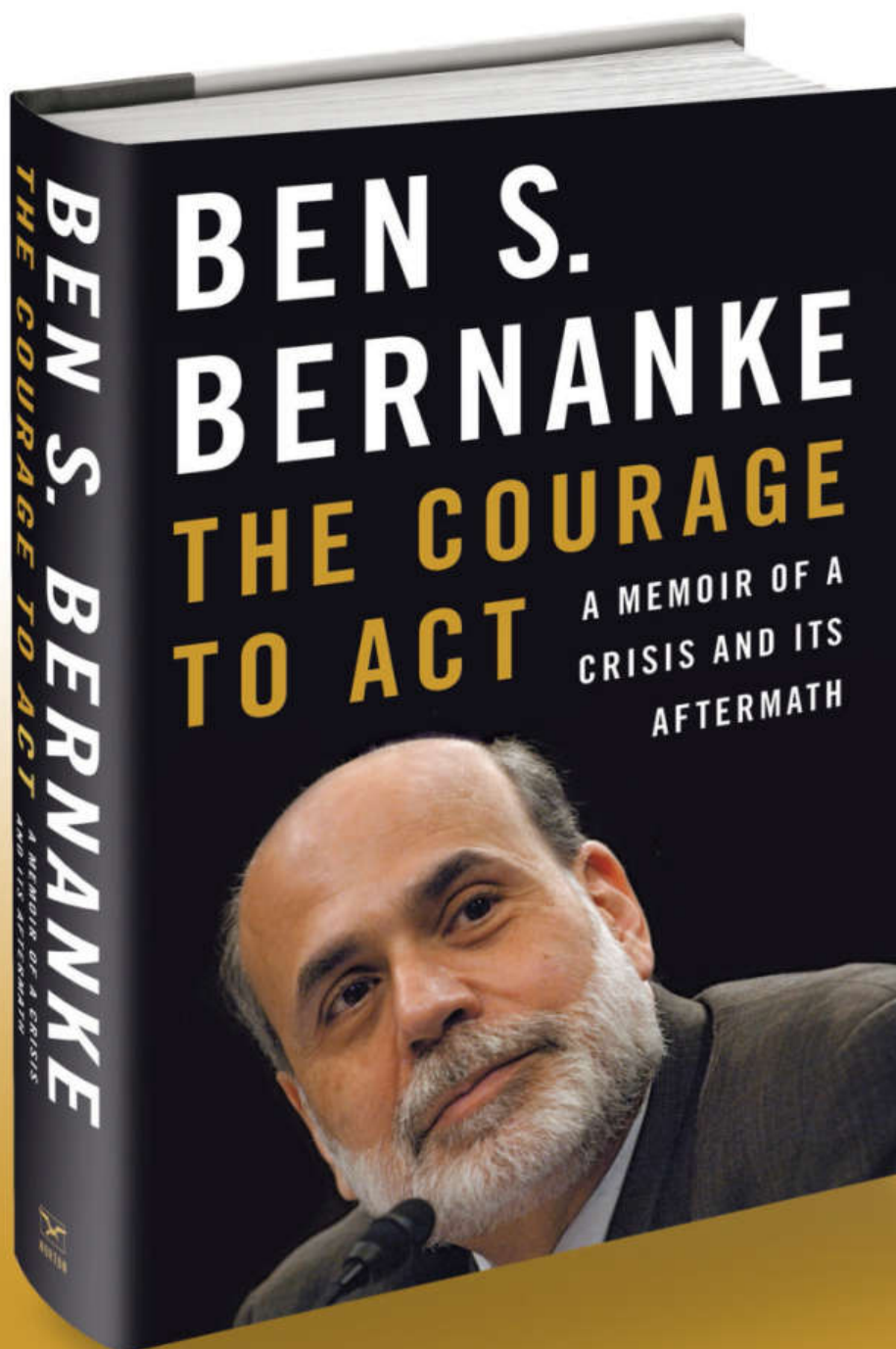
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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

On October 20, 2011, the day that Libyan rebel fighters found Colonel Muammar Qaddafi hiding in a desert culvert, hauled him out, and killed him, President Barack Obama called a press conference in the Rose Garden, and announced that we had “achieved our objectives.” (Hillary Clinton, who was then Secretary of State, put it more archly, telling a reporter, “We came, we saw, he died.”) The previous spring, when the United States had decided to join in the NATO air strikes against Libya, the White House said that regime change was not the objective, and that persuaded Russia not to veto a Security Council mandate authorizing action to protect Libyans from their ruler “by all necessary measures.” Russia was furious about NATO’s mission creep, but Obama said, “Faced with the potential of mass atrocities, and a call from the Libyan people, the United States and our friends and allies stopped Qaddafi’s forces in their tracks.” Now, he said, America’s part was done and the Libyans were free to establish full democracy. The President added, “This comes at a time when we see the strength of American leadership across the world. We’ve taken out Al Qaeda leaders, and we’ve put them on the path to defeat. We’re winding down the war in Iraq, and have begun a transition in Afghanistan.”

Four years later, Libya is a battle-worn wasteland, a bitter outcome; after all, Obama had come into office promising to extricate America from the gratuitous war he had inherited in Iraq and to resist embarking on any further such misadventures. Last Monday, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly, the President admitted that the example of Libya weighed at least as heavily as that of Iraq against any impulse to use force to impose order abroad. He still maintains that taking on Qaddafi was “absolutely” the right decision, as

he told Thomas Friedman, in the *Times*, last year, but that doing so has taught him not to engage in such action again without a plan to “fill a vacuum” after victory.

At the U.N., Obama noted that our commitment to international order is nowhere “more tested than in Syria,” which is caught between President Bashar al-Assad, who “slaughters tens of thousands of his own people,” and the Islamic State, which “beheads captives, slaughters the innocent, and enslaves women.” Either way, the President said, you’re dealing with “an assault on all humanity.” For that reason, Obama has held on to only two definite positions on Syria during the past four years: that Assad must go and that there can be no accommodating “an apocalyptic cult” like ISIS.

Vladimir Putin, who arrived at the General Assembly intent on portraying the United States as a global bully, was not about to let Obama have it both ways. In his address, which he delivered on Monday, after Obama spoke, the Russian President said that America had a penchant, in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 world, for promoting democratic revolutions abroad. These reminded him, he said, of “certain episodes from the history of the Soviet Union,” when “attempts to push for changes within other countries based on ideological preferences often led to tragic consequences and to degradation rather than progress.”

In the Middle East and North Africa, Putin continued—meaning Iraq and Libya—“aggressive foreign interference has resulted in a brazen destruction of national institutions,” along with “violence, poverty, and social disaster,” and a climate where “nobody cares a bit about human rights.” Instead of democracy, bloodshed and fanaticism had filled the vacuum, he said, and the greatest threat to world order today was ISIS, which was born





of and flourished in the wreckage of states dismantled by unchecked American power.

Putin's own aggressive foreign interference, most recently in Crimea and Ukraine, has cost him dearly on the international stage, where he has a well-founded reputation as a brutal political cynic. Nevertheless, he went on to say, "I cannot help asking those who have caused this situation, Do you realize now what you've done?" He didn't expect an answer, he said, but he made it plain that, in Syria, you have to take sides. "We think it is an enormous mistake to refuse to cooperate with the Syrian government and its armed forces, who are valiantly fighting terrorism face to face," Putin said, and, with blunt contempt for the Obama Administration's failed effort to muster an independent, democratic Syrian resistance force, he added, "We should finally acknowledge that no one but President Assad's armed forces and Kurdish militias are truly fighting the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations in Syria." On the contrary, Putin insinuated, the Americans were trying to work with some of those other terrorist groups, and he warned, "They are just as clever as you are, and you never know who is manipulating whom."

It is not surprising that the Obama-Putin contretemps was widely reported as a duel. The two Presidents do not

suffer each other gladly, and it was impossible to parse all the overlapping and coded agendas in their speeches. And yet, for all their sparring, there was an undercurrent of common cause in their pronouncements on Syria. Putin was plainly seeking to reassert Russia's position as a power broker in the Middle East, and Obama made no move to block him.

The President has preferred to pay the price of doing too little in Syria, rather than too much. It would be easy to blame him for that, if one could forget about Libya and Iraq, to say nothing of the fact that, last week, the Taliban captured a major city in Afghanistan for the first time since the United States installed the current regime in Kabul, fourteen years ago. Obama did tell the U.N. that he was prepared to put the fight against ISIS ahead of the fight against Assad, and to work with Russia and Iran to that end, as long as those nations worked to help ease Assad out. That seemed a minor concession, and one couldn't help wondering why more than two hundred thousand Syrians had died before it could be offered. Then, the next day, Russian planes began bombing an assortment of targets around Syria, and the death toll rose again.

—Philip Gourevitch

## VISITING DIGNITARIES CLEAN PLATE CLUB



Just after the sun came up one recent Sunday, a group of people assembled on the corner of Forty-seventh Street and Second Avenue. They were cooks. Several had chef's jackets rolled up under their arms like sleeping bags. They were about to be escorted into the United Nations to prepare a "working lunch" for forty world leaders. Except for the heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and for John Kerry, the leaders were Presidents. A lunch with so many Presidents was an exceptional event. So, too, was the menu. It was garbage. It was made with ingredients that would otherwise have been thrown away.

"These people, these world leaders, are used to eating for pleasure," one of the meal's organizers, Sam Kass, said. Until last year, Kass was the Obama family's private chef, and he has been involved in the White House's policies on nutrition. "They eat caviar and foie gras. I'm now seeing how badly this could go wrong. 'What is this dis-

gusting food?' Hollande might say."

François Hollande, the French President, was important because, in December, he will host a conference in Paris on climate change. The purpose of the working lunch was to prepare for that conference, and the guests tended to be big countries sympathetic to the cause or island nations that are expected to sink below the sea. Kass had an idea that a lunch of this kind might put food on the climate-change agenda: "People don't understand greenhouse-gas emission. But they understand food."

Dan Barber, the chef of Blue Hill, was the other organizer. Barber is tall and very skinny, and has hair like steel wool which, not unlike his thoughts, won't be controlled. He has a degree in English and began cooking to buy time to write a novel. The cooks who had gathered on the corner were Barber's staff and would be not only making the lunch but also serving it. ("They're the only people who could possibly explain the dishes," he said.) Last spring, Barber ran a pop-up operation using only ingredients discarded by the food industry, and has shown an aptitude for making good food out of landfill. "It is all going to come down to the veggie burger," he said. It was the main event and was principally pulp

from vegetables after they were juiced.

At the lunch, the bread, made from barley mash from a local brewery, was followed by a salad. "We don't want it to look pretty," Barber told his chefs. "These vegetable scraps come from Baldor. You see their trucks all over town, delivering to restaurants. This is the stuff left over. Baldor has tons." He smeared a green dressing on the side of a wooden bowl. "This is the landing pad. You pile the salad on top." "Landing pad," in kitchen vernacular, means something like an anchor: it keeps food from sliding off a serving dish. The fries (made with a cattle feed known as "cow corn") were served on a landing pad of ketchup made from discarded beet bits.

A man with a badge rushed in. "John Kerry is allergic to celery," he said.

"Oh, shit," Kass said.

"Adam!" Barber called out. "Can we make a new salad?" Adam Kaye is Barber's longtime sous-chef. "And Adam. There's celery in the veggie burger."

"I'll make him a chicken," Kaye said. (It turns out that Kerry merely dislikes celery.)

Meanwhile, cooks were lining up to enter the dining room, holding bread on wooden planks. Cooks are not servers, and one of them was visibly shaking even before David Barber, Dan's



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brother and business partner, called out in panic, "Hey, look at how the bread moves around!" The bread didn't have a landing pad.

"Whatever happens," Kass said, "please, for God's sake, please don't drop a bread onto Hollande's lap."

Kass is a doer, an action man, who conveys the feeling that, as long as you have the right friends and give them a good meal, anything is possible. "Has there ever been a lunch with more riding on it?" he said.

The veggie burger headed out to the dining room. "The burger is *it*," Kass said, tensely.

Dan Barber was upbeat. "That burger might be good enough to put my daughter through college," he said.

Some minutes later, Kass and Barber stood by the dishwasher, watching the plates come back. Many had a lot of food left on them. Nearly half the salads weren't finished. Many of the burgers were untouched. Barber blamed the bun. "It's the gluten thing," he said. "It's the killer." Kass, trying to be upbeat, noted that two people had ignored the bun and eaten the burger.

Barber asked a server, "And Hollande?"

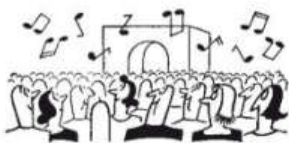
"He ate it."

"Really?"

"Hmm. Half. But he ate all of his dessert."

—Bill Buford

## THE MUSICAL LIFE GREAT ESCAPE



The other afternoon, Kenneth Pattengale stood by the stage door of the Town Hall, on West Forty-third Street, eating a sandwich, while Joey Ryan was across the street at a Starbucks. Ryan and Pattengale are the two-piece band called the Milk Carton Kids. They each play guitar, and their voices are warm and blend well, more in a Northern way (like Simon and Garfunkel) than in a Southern way (like the Everly Brothers). Onstage, their manner is deadpan and mildly rivalrous, as if they were related. They performed at the Town Hall that night, but beforehand, looking to kill an afternoon, they played a problem-solving game on the twelfth floor of a building on Thirty-first Street. They walked there down Broadway. Ryan, who is tall and has long brown hair, carried a small Starbucks bag, like a purse.

"We're going to a place called Escape the Room," Pattengale said. "You go in the room, and they lock the door, and you try to get out." Pattengale is shorter than Ryan, with a round face and dark hair. "The concept is based on old video

games where you were in a room you saw from a static point of view," he went on. "You had to find clues. It was like logic nerd's solitaire."

"We could just go into any routine living room, and to escape would be my desire," Ryan said. Pattengale looked at him as if to take stock, then said, "I did it once for my birthday. We didn't get out. This time, I'm banking on Joey and me working very closely." He turned to Ryan. "I think you'll be good at this."

"I doubt that," Ryan said. "I mean, I doubt that you think that."

"No, I mean it," Pattengale said. "You're an intelligent guy, often misguided."

At 25 West Thirty-first Street, they rode an elevator that rose uncertainly. "How cool would this be if the elevator stopped and this was the room," Ryan said. Down a hallway was a guy named Matt, who said that he was "the clue master." He led them to a furnished room—bookshelves, a chessboard. "An emergency key to get out is by the door," he said. "Some people freak out and need to leave."

"We're not going to freak out," Ryan said. They got out in thirty-eight minutes, using clues they found in books, on the chessboard, and so on. Before leaving, they had their photographs taken holding a big key and signs that said "Genius" and "Winner."

Walking back to the Town Hall, Ryan mentioned a bet they had struck.

"Oh, no, are we going into that?" Pattengale said.

"I'm a tennis player, and Kenneth's not," Ryan said. "One night, he was talking trash and he said he could beat me at tennis, and finally I put my hand out and said, 'Name a figure.'"

"It was ten thousand dollars," Pattengale said.

"The last time we bet on Kenneth's athleticism, it was at the Newport Folk Festival. After four or five Manhattans, he said he could beat the Rhode Island high-school girls' state record for the hundred-metre dash. It was the girls' record because we thought it would be the slowest record we could find. We looked it up, and it was, like, twelve point five or fourteen seconds. We were staying by the beach, and we went out and paced off the distance, and I counted off the start. After about seventy-five



"Those are prison tattoos."

S. GROSS

yards, he fell down. Then he stood up and was sick."

"I don't bet much," Pattengale said. "But Joey has an air of incorruptibility that I like to undermine."

"The match is tentatively scheduled for March," Ryan said.

"Between now and March, I have to learn to play tennis," Pattengale said.

Back at the Town Hall, they rehearsed



*The Milk Carton Kids*

songs to an empty house, then fell into an earnest discussion about the difference between "ironic" and "incongruous." "Joey's not much of a content guy," Pattengale said. "He goes through life reading things then talking about them as if he had done a broad study, but actually he's telling you what he just read."

"I'm an aggregator," Ryan said.

"It's a useful talent, but sometimes I worry that you haven't put deep thought into what you're doing in the world," Pattengale said.

"Just because I include attributions doesn't mean I don't know," Ryan said.

—Alec Wilkinson

## THE BOARDS MOVES



Eight years ago, Yehuda Duenyas directed the Thomas Bradshaw play "Purity," at P.S. 122. It tells the story of two Columbia professors who go to Ecuador to buy a twelve-year-old girl.

"There were some very graphic scenes," Duenyas said last week. In the process of getting those scenes to land, he became adept at persuading actors to do things onstage that they might not even consider doing at home in the dark.

Earlier this year, Bradshaw called Duenyas and explained that Ethan McSweeney, the director of his latest play, "Fulfillment," needed help with the sexual material in the script. In several instances, the actors were expected to simulate intercourse onstage in such a way that would make them—and, Bradshaw hoped, the audience—uncomfortable. Would Duenyas lend a hand? "Like a sex choreographer?" Duenyas said. They had a laugh. Not long afterward, he flew in from Los Angeles to attend the rehearsals, in New York. The producers wondered whether they should refer to him as a consultant. "I'm not coming to New York to be a consultant," Duenyas replied. "I'm coming to be a sex choreographer."

New jobs: Duenyas had created one, at least. "It's not really a category that's ever existed," he said. "I want to see it at the Tonys. I have a particular knack for it."

Duenyas, who is forty-one, grew up in L.A. but came to New York in 1996. He was a co-founder of the experimental troupe the National Theatre of the United States of America and a burlesque dancer. At the Box, as Duke Lafayette, he performed lewd acts with a golden mannequin leg: "I took it very seriously."

He returned to L.A. in 2011, to work at Walt Disney Imagineering. A few years ago, he created an immersion experience called the Ascent, in which participants can harness their brain waves in order to levitate. He was also a co-creator of this year's public-service campaign "Love Has No Labels," the one with the skeletons making out behind an X-ray screen. He lives in Studio City with his partner and their eight-year-old daughter. "Everyone has a sexual persona," he said. His own, he added, was "liberal. Or libertarian?"

Compared with Bradshaw's usual theatrical provocations, "Fulfillment" is fairly tame—the sex is among consenting adults. Still, Duenyas said, "for

Tom, it's 'Do it more. Do it harder. Make it more extreme.'" The script doesn't stint on detail. Referring to one stage direction—"As he glides his penis gently in and out of her"—Duenyas said, "We don't need to see that. But we need to feel it."

In rehearsals, Duenyas set about creating a so-called "safe space." "It was a secret bubble—kick everyone out and have a moment." The actors worked up to the heavy stuff. "It was a series of gated moments, like levels in a video game." Their first nude rehearsal lasted twenty seconds. "I got naked with them," Duenyas said. "It was like jumping in cold water. It was all about getting past cultural inhibitions, the elimination of shame. 'You have a body and your body is beautiful.'"

As the actors progressed, he gave them a code. Green meant "comfortable," yellow "uncomfortable," and red "I need to stop." He said, "I wanted them to be yellow-to-red, and not green. They needed to be comfortable about being out of their comfort zone." Still, the standard was "Looks good, safe, repeatable."

Choreographing sex is like choreographing fake fights or modern dance. It's as much about mechanics as about mind-set. The placement of lights and limbs can obscure or even protect private parts. "It could be as simple as 'You gotta put your dick up on your stomach there when she moves, or else it'll get crushed,'" Duenyas said. He wanted every moment to seem plausible, in terms of anatomical engineering: no small feat, to go by the first full-frontal glimpse of the lead actor, Gbenga Akinnagbe. ("The actors were cast for their acting abilities," Duenyas said. "They didn't have to disrobe.")

Duenyas hopes one day to bring his talents to the movies. Akinnagbe, who has some experience filming sex scenes, told him that that was a completely different process—you hold still for twenty minutes to light a single shot. So for now it's a stage gig. When "Fulfillment" moves to Chicago, later this fall, Duenyas will be there to work with a new cast. There has been talk that the producers might refer to him in the credits as Intimacy Choreographer. Duenyas says that that won't do.

—Nick Paumgarten



## THE FINANCIAL PAGE

### TAKING ON THE DRUG PROFITEERS

What with a former peanut-company owner, Stewart Parnell, being sent to prison for knowingly selling salmonella-tainted peanut butter, and Volkswagen's C.E.O., Martin Winterkorn, resigning after revelations about the cheat software in the firm's diesel-powered cars, it took a special magnitude of corporate misbehavior to make the business-news headlines in the past couple of weeks. But Martin Shkreli, the C.E.O. of Turing Pharmaceuticals, managed it when his company said it was raising the price of a sixty-two-year-old lifesaving drug from \$13.50 to seven hundred and fifty dollars a pill. The move quickly became a major scandal; Shkreli was called "the most hated man in America." Yet the true scandal of Turing's profiteering scheme was that it was entirely legal.

Daraprim—which is used to treat toxoplasmosis, a condition that afflicts AIDS patients, among others—first came on the market back in 1953, so it has long since gone off patent. But what Shkreli recognized was that, even with a generic drug, regulatory barriers and a lack of competition can make big price hikes possible. In Daraprim's case, only one company had regulatory approval to sell the drug in the United States. So, in August, Turing bought those rights. Shkreli knew that, in principle, other companies could produce their own versions of Daraprim. But it seemed a fair bet that none of them would try. The market for Daraprim is small—eight to twelve thousand prescriptions a year in the U.S.—and any company that wanted to enter the market would have to go through the expensive and time-consuming process of getting F.D.A. approval. As it happens, several companies already make and sell a generic version of Daraprim abroad, but they weren't a worry, either, because they, too, would have to jump through the F.D.A.'s hoops to sell it here. Turing loaded the deck even further in its own favor by insisting on a model of "closed distribution" for the drug, restricting access to patients, doctors, and a limited number of distributors and pharmacies. In the unlikely event that another company wanted to produce Daraprim, it would be hard to buy enough of the drug to reverse-engineer.

Essentially, Shkreli is exploiting rules devised to protect consumer safety in order to create a virtual monopoly and then charge whatever he wants. Monopolies are inherent to the drug industry in the U.S.: patents, in effect, are temporary monopolies. But we have patents because they give drug companies an incentive to invest in developing new drugs. There's no such justification in the case of Daraprim. Tur-

ing's price gouging does not reward innovation and it doesn't reflect the cost of production. In the United Kingdom, Daraprim sells for less than a dollar a pill.

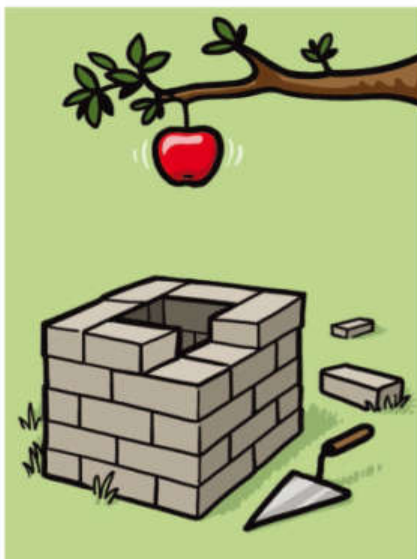
Turing's business model is a quintessential example of rent seeking: increasing profits not by adding real value for customers but by exploiting loopholes. And, unfortunately, Turing is not alone. Last year, another company run by Shkreli acquired the rights to a kidney-disease drug called Thiola and raised the drug's price twentyfold. In 2011, K-V Pharmaceutical got F.D.A. approval to market a synthetic hormone that had been used for decades to prevent preterm births. Once K-V got approval and exclusive rights, it raised the price from around fifteen dollars to fifteen hundred dollars an injection. There have also been alarming increases in the prices of common drugs like doxycycline. Generic-drug makers have been merging with each other, leaving fewer competitors. "Without price competition, the generic model fails," Gerard Anderson, a professor of public health at Johns Hopkins, told me. "Without competition, there are no market forces that limit price increases."

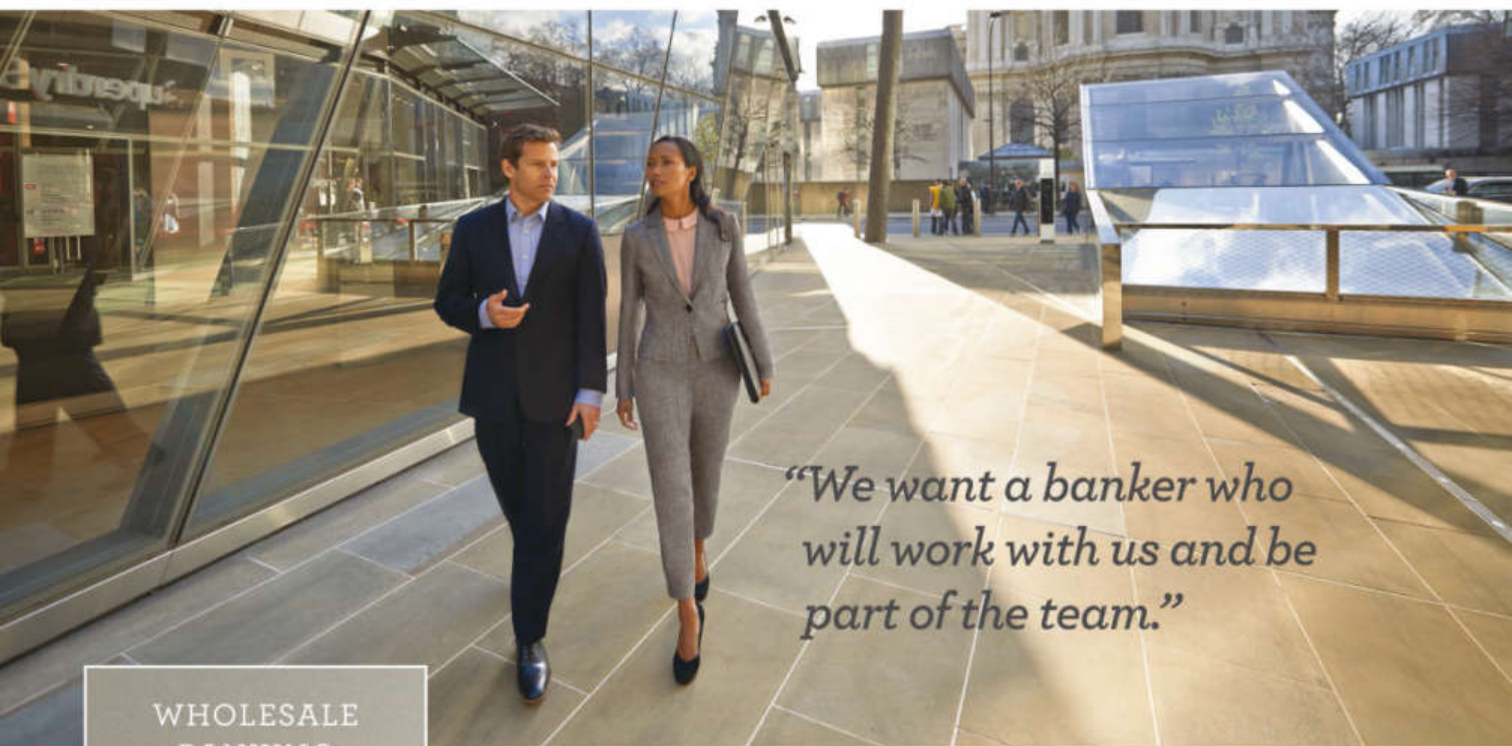
That doesn't mean there's nothing to be done. In place of closed distribution, the F.D.A. can require companies to make samples of their drugs available to competitors. The F.T.C., as Anderson argues, should be more aggressive in limiting mergers among generic-drug makers. And the U.S. and other developed countries should also adopt an arrangement known as regulatory reciprocity: if a drug maker has approval to sell a drug abroad, it should be able to sell that drug here, and vice versa. Safety concerns may rule out importing drugs from just anywhere, but there is no good reason for a company selling a drug in, say, Germany to have to spend time and money to get

the right to sell it here. Foreign competition has played a central role in holding down retail prices in industries ranging from automobiles to consumer electronics. It's time drug prices were subject to the same rules. Shkreli has said, since the backlash, that Turing will roll back the Daraprim price increase. But the fate of toxoplasmosis sufferers shouldn't depend on the egomaniacal whims of a "pharma bro."

Of course, these kinds of measures would make drug companies anxious, but they should be doing all they can to encourage competition, if only out of self-interest. If market forces and smarter regulations can't limit price gouging, then drug makers could be subject to more drastic measures, like price controls or compulsory licensing—a system that compels companies to license drugs to other manufacturers. The Turing scandal has shown just how vulnerable drug pricing is to exploitative, rent-seeking behavior. It's fair enough to excoriate Martin Shkreli for greed and indifference. The real problem, however, is not the man but the system that has let him thrive.

—James Surowiecki





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# THE ACCUSED

*When a Chinatown bank was investigated for fraud, a community's financial way of life was put on trial.*

BY JIAYANG FAN



One afternoon in the fall of 2009, Jie Chen and Ariel Chi walked into the headquarters of Abacus Federal Savings Bank, near Canal Street, to inquire about a mortgage. Chi, who was twenty-four and worked in customer service at a pharmaceutical company, had spent nearly her entire life in the United States, after her family came from Taiwan. Chen, her husband, who was a year younger, had arrived in his late teens and spoke little English. They had been married for a year and spent almost all their time in New York's various Chinese enclaves, especially Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, where Chen worked at a hair salon. They'd been living in Chen's studio apartment, not far away, but Chi was now pregnant with their first child and they needed a bigger place.

The plan was to buy a two-family house and rent out one of the units.

Looking around the neighborhood, they found one with a small garden out front. The asking price was seven hundred and eighteen thousand dollars, and they began putting together a down payment with money from savings and relatives. The difficulty was getting a loan. The subprime-mortgage crisis of 2008 had exposed lax lending standards throughout the banking industry and credit was tight. Chen had no credit history and was paid largely in cash. "We were asking everywhere," he told me in Mandarin when I visited him recently at the salon. Many people he knew in Chinatown had similar problems. His co-workers at the salon suggested a solution. "People said go to Abacus. Go to Abacus," he recalled. A hair washer told him, "It approves loans without too much fuss."

Abacus was founded thirty years ago by Thomas Sung, a lawyer and a real-estate investor who had come from

China in his teens. It is one of a dozen or so community banks in Chinatown that cater to immigrants, including undocumented ones, who often inhabit a cash economy and mistrust mainstream banks. For more than two decades, Abacus had grown at a healthy rate; the year that Chi and Chen applied for their loan, it had six branches and some hundred and fifty employees, and originated about half a billion dollars in loans.

At the Abacus headquarters, Chen and Chi went to the loan office, on the third floor, and were greeted by a stocky, talkative man named Ken Yu. Chen felt an immediate rapport. Yu was only a few years older, and, it turned out, was from Chen's home town, the coastal city of Wenzhou. He said that getting a loan would be easy if they just left everything to him. They agreed on terms, and in the weeks that followed the bank obtained employment documents while the couple wrote checks and submitted letters accounting for money family members had given them. Chen's parents wired funds from China, which they had borrowed using their home as collateral. Chen had already begun mapping out in his head which half of the house the family would live in, which half they'd rent out, where they'd put the nursery.

The closing meeting for the house took place on the morning of December 11th. Chen and Chi left their infant son with Chi's parents before heading over to Abacus. There they met their lawyer; the seller of the house and his lawyer; and Vera Sung, a daughter of Abacus's founder and an attorney who represents the bank during closings. Chen found the meeting, which was conducted in English, hard to follow. Still, he said, "I didn't care so long as I got my house." But as one of the last papers was being signed Chen remembered something: his wife had written Ken Yu two checks totalling twenty-five hundred dollars, and he wanted to make sure that this money had been credited along with his other payments. When the couple's lawyer asked about the checks, however, everyone reacted in confusion and Vera demanded to see Ken Yu. "I had no idea what was going on," Chen said. "Nobody explained anything to me." After



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### RABAT AND SALÉ

I

### LEAVING TANGIER

To step on board a steamer in a Spanish port, and three hours later to land in a country without a *guide-book*, is a sensation to rouse the hunger of the repletest sight-seer.

The sensation is attainable by any one who will take the trouble to row out into the harbour of Algeciras and scramble onto a little black boat headed across the straits. Hardly has the rock of Gibraltar turned to cloud when one's foot is on the soil of an almost unknown Africa. Tangier, indeed, is in the *guide-books*; but, cuckoo-like, it has had to lay its eggs in strange nests, and the traveller who wants to find out about it must acquire a work dealing with some other country Spain or Portugal or Algeria. There is no *guide-book* to Morocco, and no way of knowing.

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Vera and her sister Jill, the bank's president, questioned Yu and found his answers suspicious, they called off the close. (It later emerged that Ken Yu had not only taken money from the couple but had also misrepresented income details in the mortgage application.) "It was like the sky had fallen and my world collapsed," Chen told me. He knew that the seller would likely get to keep the ten-per-cent deposit the couple had already paid. The money—seventy-two thousand dollars—was more than two years' salary. "It's the blood-and-sweat money that I earned," he said. A month after the meeting, the couple walked into the N.Y.P.D.'s Fifth Precinct, a few minutes from the bank. They told the police that an employee of Abacus Bank had stolen money from them.

By then, the Sung sisters had fired Ken Yu and two other employees and the bank had begun an internal investigation. It reported the findings to regulators and law enforcement and later

hired outside investigators to examine the loan department. But Chen and Chi's visit to the police had also triggered a criminal probe. On May 31, 2012, Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., the Manhattan District Attorney, announced a hundred-and-eighty-four-count indictment against the bank, two of its supervisors, and nine of its former employees. The charges included residential-mortgage fraud, falsification of business records, and conspiracy. Abacus employees were marched through the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse, handcuffed together. Some faced a maximum sentence of twenty-five years in prison.

Ten Abacus employees accepted plea deals in exchange for testifying against the bank, and Ken Yu became the star witness. The indictment alleged that, in order to approve mortgages for unqualified borrowers, the bank had systematically falsified loan-application documents, "inflating or exaggerating their assets, incomes, and job titles." This resulted in "fraudulent

mortgages" being sold to Fannie Mae, the federally backed mortgage company. Fannie Mae's purchase of risky mortgages was a widespread problem during the subprime lending crisis, something that Vance emphasized in a press conference announcing the indictment. "If we've learned anything from the recent mortgage crisis, it's that at some point, these schemes unravel and taxpayers can be left holding the bag," he said.

But in some ways Abacus was a surprising target for a high-profile mortgage-fraud case. Of the four thousand three hundred and ninety mortgages that Abacus held in 2009, only sixteen were in trouble, a delinquency rate less than a twentieth of the national average. Chinese immigrants, poor though some of them were, seemed to be far more dependable as borrowers than the rest of America. Of all the institutions that were investigated for mortgage fraud after the financial crisis, the only commercial bank that was brought to trial



was a small community bank whose assets had never exceeded two hundred and eighty-two million dollars—around a hundredth of one per cent of the assets of Bank of America.

The office of Thomas Sung, the founder of Abacus, is three floors above where the tellers sit at the bank's headquarters. It is a ramshackle room, determinedly functional and frugally furnished. When I first visited, in February, boxes of files formed a mountain on the floor, law journals were piled on cheap shelving, and a straggly potted palm wilted in a corner. The only color was from the tea sets, a traditional Chinese ceremonial gift, that had been left lying around. To Sung's customers, the décor would be reassuring; it is the office of someone who knows that money is too important to be spent casually.

Sung is eighty and splits his time between Florida and Connecticut. But when he's in Connecticut he still comes into the office every day. Avuncular in

manner, he is nonetheless steely and disciplined. He stays quiet as his family members chatter. When he speaks, everyone falls silent.

Moving a heap of financial manuals aside, Sung produced a copy of his father's application for a Treaty Trader visa to the United States, where the family arrived in 1951, having left their home, in Chongqing, Sichuan, a couple of years earlier. The application, hundreds of pages long, included an extensive history of a brush-bristle manufacturer, the New China Bristles Company, which Sung's father owned. Tucked into the pages were black-and-white photographs of workers, managers, and apprentices in dark cheongsam robes. Sung told me that the firm supported an orphanage, whose charges often grew up to become employees in the factory.

Sung pointed to a picture that showed a big-eared, sombre boy of sixteen wearing a checkered tie. "That's what I looked like entering Ellis Island," he

said. Sung's family was wealthier than most immigrants to America, but his mother died soon after their arrival and he was expected to look after the family instead of building a career. His father refused to pay for legal studies, so Sung put himself through Brooklyn Law School and developed austere habits. In the early nineteen-sixties, he met his wife, Hwei Lin; they settled in Chinatown, and Vera, their eldest child, was born in 1966.

By then, Sung was a man on the rise. He worked for a largely Jewish law firm that had handled his family's immigration application—"They liked to call me Shapiro!" he said—but soon opened an office of his own. In the sixties, there weren't many Chinese lawyers, and almost no one who understood the intricate and informal ways of Chinatown. Sung was fluent in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Sichuanese, which enabled him to slip between different worlds. Working from a storefront on Pell Street, where he had to

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jump over garbage pails to reach the front door, he quickly found an untapped market. “I was one of the biggest immigration lawyers in New York back in the day,” he recalled with pride. As his law practice grew, Sung began buying real estate. Once, as I walked down Market Street with him, he said, “I used to own this entire block.” “Everyone knew Thomas Sung,” Kenny Chan, a veteran Chinatown publisher, told me.

The Sungs had four daughters, and in 1972 they moved to Greenwich, Connecticut. Vera was the first Asian child to attend Glenville Elementary School. The sisters took swimming lessons at the Y and played tennis at a local sports club.

Chanterelle, the youngest of the four, competed in what she jokingly calls “rich-white-people sports.” Today, none of the sisters know how to spell their name in Chinese, and it wasn’t until we had met a few times that they learned to pronounce my name without mishap. Vera told me, “I felt like I never fit in in Chinatown, because my parents only wanted us to learn English.” Jill, the second oldest, said, “I call us the lost generation, because our parents, being immigrants, just wanted us to assimilate.”

In 1984, Sung founded Abacus. He told me that difficulties getting funding for one of his real-estate developments alerted him to the need for a bank serving the Chinese community. Abacus’s beginnings were modest—the original premises, which are now a T-Mobile store, were robbed twice in the first year—but it was a good time to start a bank. Few banks in the neighborhood even hired Chinese-speaking employees, and fewer still made an attempt to understand the financial world of immigrants, who were often paid in cash, sent much of their income home in remittances, and liked to stash valuables in safe-deposit boxes. Abacus’s employees tended to be Chinatown residents who saw job listings in the Chinese-language papers, and who, like the customers they served, were often immigrants or the children of immigrants. The bank grew fast, especially as trade between the U.S. and China increased through-

out the nineties. It began offering wire transfers, and in the weeks leading up to the Chinese New Year would process several hundred such transactions a day. Sung developed the use of non-traditional borrower profiles—a way of examining routine household payments to assess creditworthiness among people who don’t have a typical credit history. Abacus opened branches in Chi-



nese enclaves across the city, in New Jersey, and in Pennsylvania, and it expanded into insurance and securities.

From the start, Thomas Sung groomed his daughters to enter the family business. Vera recalls being taken to real-estate closings as a teen-ager, and three of

Sung’s four daughters attended law school. (The fourth went to medical school.) Vera and Chanterelle worked for the District Attorney’s office, in Brooklyn and Manhattan, respectively. Vera recalled, “Our father said we should become prosecutors because that’s the best way to gain experience and rise on the ladder.” In 2005, Jill, who was then thirty-seven, and had received an M.B.A. from Wharton, succeeded her father as C.E.O. and president. Vera, though not an employee of the bank, is on the board of directors and runs the family law firm, Sung & Co.

Jill told me that she’d long known she would come to work for the bank one day. When I asked her if she ever felt tempted by more mainstream prospects, given her education, she spoke of the importance of giving back to the community that had provided the foundation for her family’s success. “It’s a luxury to go to college and law school without having to worry about loans, because your parents are able to pay for it,” she said. But she was candid about the challenges that running a Chinatown bank presented for someone who had grown up outside the community. “I remain very self-conscious,” she told me one afternoon, as we sat in her office, which is as neat as her father’s is messy, and contains no Chinese decoration at all. “My father started a community bank because he is fluent in multiple dialects and worlds,” she said. “But, as the president of that community bank,

I can’t visit its customers without someone to help me translate.”

Yet even Thomas Sung’s cultural fluency couldn’t protect against all eventualities. In 2003, a Chinese-language newspaper reported that a branch manager on Canal Street named Carol Lim had made off with ten million dollars. Thousands of panicked customers lined up outside the bank’s various locations, desperate to retrieve their cash. The bank came within an hour of a takeover by the F.D.I.C. “I was outside with a police bullhorn trying to calm the people,” Thomas Sung told me. “There were rumors that I had fled with Carol Lim to China!” Lim, who was never found, had been with the company for fifteen years. “She spoke multiple Chinese dialects and was fluent in English,” Sung said. “And I needed someone to run a branch.” I asked him what he took away from the episode. He blinked and responded, “You want to believe the best in people, but sometimes it’s hard to do that, maybe except for your family.”

The family saw similarities between Lim and Ken Yu. Vera said, “There’s a Carol Lim in every generation.” Like Lim, Yu was extremely capable. After coming to America, at sixteen, Yu worked in a sweatshop in Queens—to pay off the snakehead who had smuggled his parents into the country—but still did well enough in school to go to Pace University, where he majored in business. He began working at Abacus in 2005 and rose rapidly. By 2009, his salary, based largely on commissions, had increased eightfold, to two hundred and twenty-three thousand dollars a year. Fluent in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, and the dialect of Wenzhou, he was one of the few employees who could converse with the entire staff and with virtually any customer. “He’s a learner and a striver,” Vera told me. Her father nodded, and said, “I would have thought of him as someone with a future, someone with management potential.”

Immigrants have always formed enclaves in their adoptive countries, but American Chinatowns are particularly large and inward-looking, in part because of the strained circumstances in which the Chinese came to America. In the nineteenth century, as the gold rush in America and the Opium

Wars in China spurred mass migration, the United States passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The act, which wasn't repealed until 1943, remains the only federal law ever to exclude a group of people by nationality. It instituted a variety of measures designed to deter Chinese workers from entering the mainstream labor market. Driven out of mines, mills, and factories, they clustered in urban ghettos. Generations of Chinese could not assimilate and planned to stay only as long as it took to save enough to retire back in China.

This sojourner mentality gave way to a settler ethos only after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. "The Immigration Act allowed family union," Peter Kwong, a professor of Asian-American Studies at Hunter College, told me. "It encouraged migration as a family unit." From 1960 to 1985, America's Chinese population more than quadrupled, and immigrants began to aspire to own property here. The Chinese have one of the highest rates of home ownership in the world: eighty per cent of households in China own their home; in the United States, the percentage is sixty-five. Culturally, the Chinese invest home ownership with all their hopes of success and stability. Min Zhou, a professor of sociology and Asian-American Studies at U.C.L.A., told me, "For many Chinese, it's a precondition of starting a family, and also an investment in the future."

But, for recent immigrants to the U.S., buying a home presents challenges. "Most residents who don't leave Chinatown and don't speak English are intimidated by the idea of going to a mainstream bank," Zhou said. "It's like going to a foreign country all over again." The fact that such people often work exclusively in a cash economy means that their income is hard to prove. "They are busboys, seamstresses, nail-salon employees," Zhou said. "They are paid in bills at the end of every day or week. It's only when they go get a mortgage or loan that it gets to be a problem."

The difficulty immigrants face getting bank credit means that more traditional ways of raising money remain prevalent. At the simplest level, extended-family networks are tapped for cash that has a status somewhere

between that of a gift and a loan. "The money is a type of relationship insurance—it's a way of binding the family together," Zhou explained. Whether the numerical amount is paid back is less crucial than what it signifies. "It's that you will come to my aid, in whatever form I need, when I have difficulty. I saved up a hundred thousand dollars for my son's down payment. If he can pay me back someday, great. If not, I don't expect the money back. He's family, and my grandchildren might grow up in that house."

Another important means of raising capital is a *hui* (which means "association" in Chinese). A method of pooling money, the *hui* involves a consortium of acquaintances who contribute to the pool. The details of the practice vary, but often whoever agrees to pay the highest rate of interest wins the pot. Money pools are clannish, with members of a given *hui* typically coming from the same region of China or even from the same village. "If you don't pay back the money you owe, not only you but your entire family, both here and in China, may be at risk," Zhou said. "You hear a lot about Chinatown youth gangs hired by associations to enforce loans." In 2012, a thirty-six-year-old woman was murdered in her apartment on Henry Street for allegedly

attempting to flee with two hundred thousand dollars taken from a *hui*; the apartment was set on fire in order to conceal the crime. The implicit threat of violence or ostracism is one reason that lending money is seen as safe in the Chinese community. "If you are in Chinatown, and if your options are limited, you cannot afford not to be honest," Zhou said.

Robert Hockett, a law professor at Cornell who specializes in bank regulation and real-estate finance, told me that he thought the Abacus case illustrated an evolution in lending practices, which he outlined in three stages. In the first phase, there was little need for written contracts because in traditional communities no one would risk breaking his or her word. In the second, when formal contracts started to appear alongside the old understandings, a lender assessed a borrower's creditworthiness "at least partly on the basis of exposure to the community." This was essentially the world of Abacus's customers, and Hockett stressed that, until quite recently, it was the world of mainstream American banking, too. "Mortgage loans were provided mainly by local banks, or savings-and-loan institutions," he said. "The lender knew who the borrower was and could do a credit check pretty easily."

He went on, "Finally, the third stage



*"It's a common misconception that resting bitch face affects only women. Statistically, it's a man's disease."*





*"A robot was doing my job, but it quit."*

is the stage that really took off, starting in the nineties, and brought us the crisis. This is what's called the 'originate to distribute' model. Here what you get is a bunch of loan originators who don't know you at all. They're extending loans to you fully intending to sell the loans to somebody else who knows you even less well—the securitizer. And so now the only thing you have is the paper. The documentation is everything. There is literally no space for trust at all."

In a sense, Abacus's customers—with their limited financial horizons and their reliance on networks of trust—were living the thrifty lives that small-town Americans once prided themselves on. Whereas the financial crisis was caused by mainstream American banks making loans that they knew were likely to result in default, the low rate of default at Abacus showed the bank to be uncannily astute in reckoning the financial capacity of its borrowers. As an op-ed in a Chinatown newspaper put it, "If every bank behaved like Abacus, the financial crisis wouldn't have occurred."

However, unspoken in many discussions about the Chinatown economy is the issue of tax evasion. The under-reporting of income means that the gap

between a prospective home buyer's official income and his or her actual resources can be enormous. The Abacus borrowers who eventually admitted falsifying loan applications were frequently trying to account for money that they actually did have but had previously failed to report. Instead of inflating incomes, as the D.A. alleged, in many cases Abacus had seemingly managed to accurately assess borrowers' true incomes, rather than the artificially low numbers they divulged to the I.R.S. According to the indictment for the case, in 2009 Abacus lobbied for an exemption to a proposed Fannie Mae rule that would require borrowers to permit examination of their tax returns. The indictment alleged that Abacus knew the rule would harm its business, and pointed out that when the bank was denied the exemption its loan-origination volume fell by ninety per cent. (Abacus maintains that this drop-off was a result of the investigation, during which it suspended loan activity.)

The trial began this January, at the New York State Supreme Court in Manhattan. By that time, the prosecution had amassed a great deal of circumstantial evidence about activities at the

bank: nearly all the employees in the loan department had either been indicted or had pleaded guilty to offenses that included falsifying employment and gift letters and exaggerating the incomes of borrowers. Nonetheless, in the nine hundred thousand documents that were subpoenaed from Abacus, there was no explicit communication from any senior management condoning any of the activities cited in the indictment. In the Sung's view, this was a sign of innocence; to the D.A.'s office, it indicated only that the Sung's knew enough not to communicate as incautiously as the more recent immigrants they employed did.

No one disputed that the bank had approved false loan applications. But, whereas Abacus blamed rogue employees, prosecutors insisted that those employees were executing a tacit policy of the bank. At one point, a prosecutor presented a diagram of an open-plan office in the Abacus loan department, showing who sat where and what wrongdoing each employee had admitted. The desks effectively encircled the desk of a supervisor who was now a defendant. How could he not have known what was going on all around him? the prosecutor asked. Furthermore, if he knew, then the bank's management was legally responsible. "Why do loan officers and processors feel so comfortable making up this information?" she asked the jury. "It's because that is the Bank's practice. That is what the Bank does."

Three weeks into the trial, I saw Ken Yu calmly reading *Fortune* magazine as he waited to take the witness stand. He was now in his mid-thirties and plump. He wore a dark suit, a baby-blue tie, and, on one finger, an emerald ring. He never made eye contact with the Sung's, even when identifying Jill for the court. Yu was one of the few witnesses who didn't require a translator, but he spoke English haltingly. His manner was both brazen and evasive, and the five days that he spent on the stand devolved into a wearying cycle of omissions and "I don't remember"s. Asked during cross-examination whether he was doing something wrong by passing on borrower information that he knew to be false, he glared and replied, "Could be, but not never my responsibility to judge right or wrong."

The bank's legal team had decided that the best strategy was to chip away at the credibility of the prosecution's witnesses rather than to put anyone from the bank on the stand. "It should not be about you," Jill recalled being advised. "It should be about how bad their witnesses are." This approach worked well when it came to cross-examining the borrowers. Many of these people—restaurant workers, gift-stand owners, seamstresses—had little formal education or contact with mainstream American society, and some had received pre-dawn knocks on their doors by investigators with unsettlingly comprehensive knowledge of their immigration and employment status. They looked uncomfortable in the courtroom, alternately perplexed, intimidated, and contemptuous of the proceedings.

The bank's lawyers drew attention to the aspects of their lives that sounded shadiest to outsiders. When one counsel asked a fidgety young cook if he knew the co-owner of the restaurant where he worked and with whom he also happened to live, the man initially claimed that he had "only met this person a few times," but then conceded, "You can say she's like a sister."

"Is she like a sister or she is your sister?" the counsel pressed.

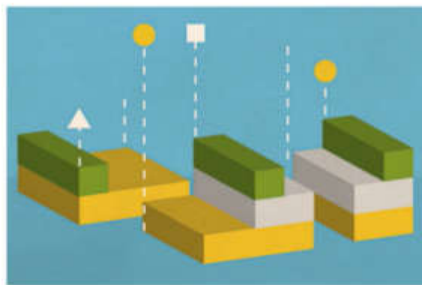
"She's my sister," the man said.

The defense also focussed on the prevalence of tax evasion among borrowers. "Year after year you filed false tax returns to avoid paying taxes; isn't that right?" a lawyer asked one borrower, who replied, "I would say it's sort of like that. I reported a little less." As well as casting doubt on the reliability of the witnesses, this line of questioning emphasized that many of Abacus's borrowers could afford mortgages that were significantly larger than their declared incomes would suggest.

Traditional Chinatown practices such as *hui* and ambiguous loans or gifts from family members became significant in the trial, because Fannie Mae generally forbids the use of loaned money as a down payment to secure a mortgage. However, once the witnesses were on the stand, the distinction between a gift and a loan broke down. A restaurant worker in his thirties, asked if he had an obligation to pay his brother back, said, "Well, it's not like I don't need to pay

back; it's like when I have the ability." In that case, it wasn't a legal obligation, the defense counsel said, pushing for clarity. "Well, I think so, because we all a family member, we don't have any I.O.U. written down," the man replied.

Frequent translation problems complicated matters even more. In New York courts, budget constraints have limited the hiring of interpreters, which has led to scrutiny from lawyers' associations. Because transcripts of trials are entirely in English, there is no permanent record of what was said in other languages. At times during the trial, it was unclear how much unintelligibility was caused by mistranslation and how much by the deliberate indirection of witnesses. On one occasion, a prosecutor, trying to get to the bottom of a previous mistranslation, asked a witness, "The interpreter didn't know what the word 'everything' means?" I then heard the interpreter mistranslate this question into Mandarin as "Why didn't the interpreter interpret everything?" Few people involved in the case were in a position to know that the translation had gone awry, but three reporters who were covering the trial for Chinese-language papers were very familiar with the problem. "This is physically painful to listen to," a reporter for *Sing Tao Daily* whispered at one point. When a lawyer asked a witness, "Isn't it true that you have no problem



lying when it's in your interest to do so?" the interpreter rendered it as "Doesn't it harm your over-all interests to lie?" The bank's lawyers did not speak Chinese, and the mistake entered the official court record.

The jury's deliberations began in late May and went on for nearly two weeks. Both sides seemed pessimistic about the outcome. Eventually, the judge implored the members of

the jury to come to a verdict, and on June 3rd and 4th they found Abacus and its co-defendants not guilty on all counts.

In Chinatown, residents and business owners called to congratulate the Sungs. Local newspapers put the news of the bank's acquittal on their front pages. Criticism of the prosecution was not limited to the Chinese press. The *Times* called the case "dubious." Bennett L. Gershman, a former prosecutor at the Manhattan D.A.'s office who is now a professor at Pace Law School, told me, "This case just involved a terrible example of poor judgment by the prosecutor." He characterized it as a "David and Goliath situation," echoing a widespread view that it was simply convenient to make an example of a small bank like Abacus.

I visited Cyrus Vance, Jr., in his office, overlooking Hogan Place, and asked if there were lessons to be learned from the outcome of the trial. He maintained that it had been right to investigate the case and bring it to trial. "This was a response to a complaint which required us to look at their files," he said. "There was a protocol that would have been followed if the bank was Citibank or if the bank was a bank servicing South American immigrants."

He remained unconvinced by the argument that, since Abacus's loans performed well, no harm was done. "Just as in the mortgage boom of 2008, everything was fine until it wasn't," he said. It was one thing for a bank to follow subjective assessments of borrowers' creditworthiness, but another to sell the resulting loans to an institution like Fannie Mae. "If I promise I'm selling you a new car, and it looks great but the engine is rebuilt and I don't tell you, and the engine could fall apart in fifty thousand miles," he said, "you may love the car and you may be happy, but you don't know that you're buying something that actually has the potential not to perform."

Vance also thought that Abacus had placed its borrowers at risk. "The individuals who were getting the loans got the benefit of the loan but were also at risk in ways that were unfair to them," he said. "For all the good that Abacus Bank does, I felt that, in this case, there was a failure on the bank's



part, through its employees, to be honest with the borrowers as to the implications that filing false documentation brings."

I contacted a former employee of Abacus, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. He felt that the case was wrongheaded, but for reasons that were completely different from any I'd heard other people voice. "I thought the D.A.'s office might address the bigger, systemic problem of tax evasion in Chinatown and admonish the population about the importance of following the law," he said, shaking his head. "But they chose to draw this stupid parallel between Abacus and the financial crisis."

He was also scornful of Vance's idea that Abacus had put its borrowers at risk. "Don't tell me the borrowers are innocent," he said. "They don't need protection, because they are the biggest beneficiaries and perpetrators in the entire case. Some of these people earn half a million or more and still get to be on welfare and Medicaid."

He wasn't surprised that the prosecution hadn't managed to prove that Abacus's officers encouraged the falsification of incomes. "Nobody explicitly tutors you," he said. "When you are on the inside, you see the way the documents are written. You have to remember that the hires are people from the immigrant community. They know how things work." He went on, "To be honest, we didn't think we were really breaking rules so much as circumventing them—you know, in a Chinese way."

He found it genuinely hard to say whether the Sung family knew what was going on. On the one hand, he thought that everyone in Chinatown knew how things worked. Yet he didn't really consider the Sung sisters to be Chinese at all, and he didn't believe anyone at the bank deserved conviction, given that "the borrowers were getting off scot-free." Extending his arms wide, he said, "This case should have been about *this* much stuff and the economic realities of a large group of people." He pulled his hands in so that they were almost touching, and said, "Instead, the government places the blame on a tiny group of people who are not even the root of the problem."

Not long after the trial, I went back

to the hair salon in Bensonhurst to tell Jie Chen about the verdict. He was on his smoke break, looking at Google street-view images of houses on his smartphone. "It's for a friend who's looking to buy," he told me. He hadn't heard about the verdict and didn't seem to think that it mattered. "Who cares who wins?" he said. "Lawyers, bankers—they are all certified crooks." Chen seemed to think that Abacus, far from taking risks to help his countrymen, was part of an American conspiracy to bilk Chinese immigrants of their savings. The only person he still trusted was Ken Yu. I pointed out that Yu had under oath repeatedly confessed to stealing from him and his wife. Chen just shook his head as if I were the one who was confused. "It was all the bank," he said. Then he smiled. "If I had millions of dollars, I would devise a scheme. I would buy houses and try to sell them to the exact kind of people who I knew couldn't close due to some bullshit glitch. And then I would take their down payment."

A few days after the trial ended, Thomas Sung, Vera, Jill, and Chantrelle had lunch at the family's favorite restaurant, a block from the office. On the walk over, they were continually recognized and congratulated on the outcome of the trial. "I heard the news!" a jowly man in his mid-fifties said, taking Sung's hand. "We've been wanting to get a loan from you!" he continued in Cantonese. Then, seeing Jill, he repeated the sentence, this time in English. Jill explained that the man was the owner of a car-service company and a longtime customer of Abacus. Meanwhile, Thomas Sung had been spotted by another passerby and was engaged in another conversation, in another dialect. Addressing me in Sichuanese—like him, I was born in Chongqing—Sung apologized to me for the delay, and I told him that he seemed to be a celebrity. "Everybody knows me, because I took the tough immigration cases back in the day," he said. "I always say I take the illegal immigrants, make them legal, bring their family together, help them buy a house, help them start their business. And when they are successful they don't need me anymore, and then they go to Citibank."

The restaurant, Hop Lee, which means "communal benefit," was a no-frills Cantonese place, wedged between a trendy Japanese ramen shop and a dry-goods store. Inside, only a couple of tables were occupied. At one, a large Chinese family tried in vain to quiet a tired baby. Nearby, two older men enjoyed a leisurely meal of noodles and Tsingtao beers. Switching between Mandarin and Cantonese, Thomas Sung exchanged greetings with the waiter and ordered for us, without a menu. Not everything he ordered was palatable to the sisters. They pushed a clay pot of chicken feet, with claws attached, toward their father. "My kids eat the feet," Jill said. "It's because they had a Chinese nanny."

I asked about the challenge of running a bank whose clientele and staff did not seem to understand the regulations. The two generations answered differently. Thomas said that the cultural gap was an advantage for Abacus: "That's how I knew Chinatown needed a bank back then!" But Jill admitted that there were risks, and that the applicant pool for jobs was uncomfortably shallow: "On the one hand, we want to be giving those in the community a chance to make a life, but on the other we need qualified candidates." She recalled an incident that occurred after Ken Yu was fired. "We were looking for another Chinese-speaking loan officer," she said. "An employee at the bank had heard of a really good applicant. I asked what his name was. It was Ken Yu!" The community, in the end, remained an island apart from the city, and options were limited both for the bank and for its customers. Vera said that one of the borrowers who had testified against the bank stopped by soon after giving her testimony to apply for another mortgage.

The waiter came out to clear our plates, smelling faintly of cigarettes. As the young man bent forward, Thomas Sung patted him on the head, and the man smiled. Sung switched to Cantonese, the waiter's first language. Vera asked her father, "Did he go to the barber you recommended?" Sung didn't answer. He was absorbed in a conversation that neither his daughters nor I could understand. ♦

# EXTREMELY LOUD DOORBELLS

BY JACK HANDEY



As the president of the Extremely Loud Doorbell Company, I am frustrated and puzzled by the many charges that have been levelled against us.

Perhaps the most common charge is that our doorbells cause people to go deaf. This is patently untrue, for reasons I can't think of right now. I can only point to our service policy, which guarantees that if, for any reason, a customer's hearing begins to decline, we will visit his home and turn up the volume on his doorbell.

Some people blame us for the recent upsurge in cat frightenings. But, as I testified before Congress, cats are frightened by many things, not just doorbells. A person in the household may take up the bagpipes, for instance, or become fascinated by the Old West and call people to dinner with a chuck-wagon triangle; or a large, burly man may join a hockey team and play goalie, and then forget his house keys, so that when he comes home he has to go around to the sliding-glass patio door and pound on it with upraised fists,

while still wearing his hockey mask, shouting, "Let me in! Let me in!" Any of these things can scare a cat.

Can a child ringing a loud doorbell over and over cause someone to have a brain aneurysm? Common sense says no, and so did our expert witnesses. Yet this is the type of crazy accusation we face.

Some people even claim that our doorbells can cause nails and screws to come loose. This is absurd. In fact, testing in our laboratories shows that the intense sonic blast emitted by our doorbells actually drives nails and screws in deeper.

Perhaps the strangest charge is that, during wakes, our doorbells can cause the deceased to twitch or jerk. One plaintiff even claimed that a body suddenly opened its eyes!

These false allegations insult the memory of my great-grandfather, Hiram something or other, who started our proud company nearly a hundred and thirty years ago. He came to this country with only ten dollars in his pocket and three thousand dollars in

his suitcase. He observed that, when a gentleman went calling and rapped his cane on a front door, it often took an annoyingly long time for someone to answer. That's when he founded the Extremely Heavy Cane-Head Company. The company prospered, and he grew rich. But he could not have foreseen the advent of thin, easily breakable doors.

The company foundered, and was rescued by my grandfather, who came up with another invention: the peephole. Unfortunately, Grandpa made the peepholes larger and larger, which eventually defeated the whole purpose. Sales plummeted.

My father decided to take the company back to its roots. He focussed on the doorbell, experimenting with powerful pneumatic compressors and metal alloys that could vibrate hundreds of times a second. But he could not get the doorbell to be loud enough. Then, one day, while out shooting pheasant, he hit on the answer, and rushed home. When the button was pressed, it would cause a shotgun shell to discharge, slamming the clanger into the bell with unbelievable force. Thus was born the Extremely Loud Doorbell.

No longer would people have to wonder whether someone was at the front door or if an ice-cream truck was driving by or if someone had dropped a fork in the kitchen. Now they could be sure—"Shotgun Sure!," as our motto says.

The Extremely Loud Doorbell has been used everywhere, from acupuncture clinics to glassblowing studios. One was even installed in the space shuttle, although it was later jettisoned. To this day, that doorbell orbits the Earth. Some people claim to occasionally hear it.

Ironically, the courts did not believe the only true charge against our company: Repeated exposure to the Extremely Loud Doorbell in a business setting can cause a person to go temporarily insane, and transfer money from a company account to a personal account without intending to, or even realizing it.

While on my forced hiatus, I hope to work on a new idea of mine, the cell door that closes softly and quietly. ♦



## TRENDING

*Olivier Rousteing's glamour army.*

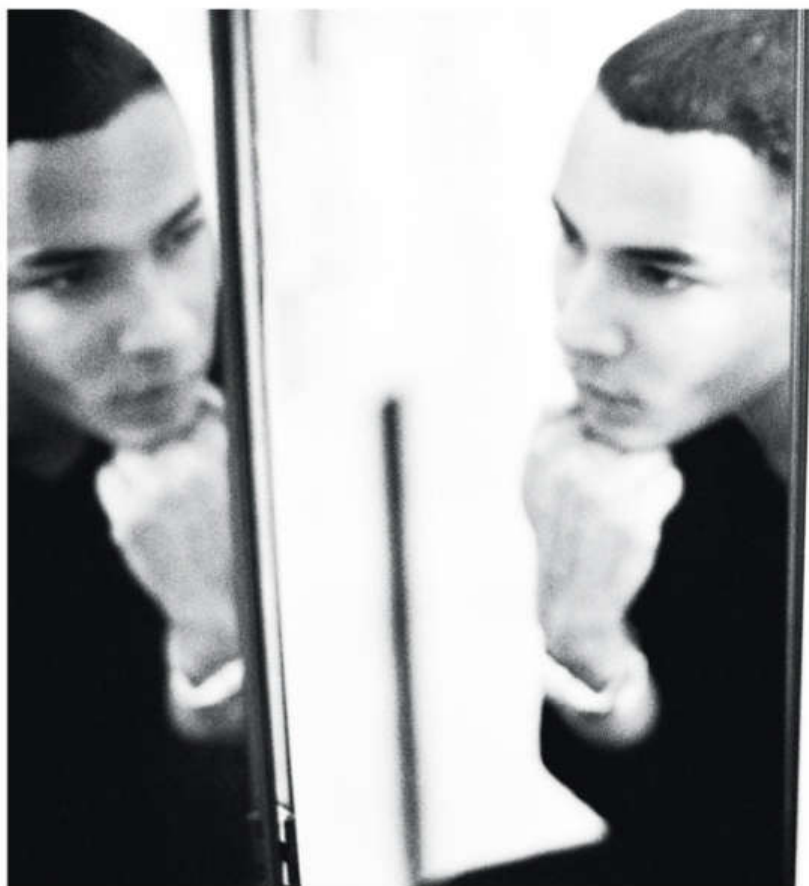
BY JOHN COLAPINTO

After the fashion house Balmain showed its fall-winter collection last March, Olivier Rousteing, the creative director, threw a celebratory dinner for fifty of his most valued friends—his “besties,” he likes to say. The venue was Lapérouse, a Louis XV-era restaurant and former brothel on the Left Bank of the Seine,

tinguish the designer from his models. The designer is older, and dressed with studied casualness; the models look like models. At Lapérouse, Rousteing, wearing a narrow-waisted velvet blazer and tight jeans, was harder to tell from the mannequins. He is thirty—young for a creative director—and ostentatiously fit. Of mixed racial heritage, he has carefully tended

from a bottle of water. He arrived at dinner still tense, so he loosened up with a glass of wine and a cigarette while he danced with the models. Yet, as the evening wore on, he found the mood too “corporate.” He rose from the table and gathered a small group of his younger guests, including Kardashian’s half sister Kendall Jenner, who had walked in the show, and Gigi Hadid, a model and former star of “The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills.” Beckoning to them, Rousteing said, “Let’s explore.” Like the kids in the Narnia books, they crept, whispering and giggling, up a dark, narrow staircase.

The upstairs rooms—the *petits salons*—had once kept the restaurant in business: in the nineteenth century, a local regulation made it impossible to prosecute



*Critics object to Rousteing's using Justin Bieber and Kim Kardashian as models, but his Instagram followers love it.*

with snug, low-ceilinged rooms filled with red velvet furniture and etched mirrors. In a private dining chamber, Rousteing sat at the head table with Kim Kardashian and her husband, Kanye West. The actor Jared Leto was seated nearby, ringed by Balmain executives and models who had walked in the runway show. At most fashion events, it is easy to dis-

tinguish the designer from his models. The designer is older, and dressed with studied casualness; the models look like models. At Lapérouse, Rousteing, wearing a narrow-waisted velvet blazer and tight jeans, was harder to tell from the mannequins. He is thirty—young for a creative director—and ostentatiously fit. Of mixed racial heritage, he has carefully tended

Backstage, after the show, Rousteing had been so worried about the forthcoming reviews that he began sweating heavily and stripped to his tank top, retreating to a corner to fan himself and gulp

adultery if it occurred in public, and so the rooms provided discreet accommodations for moneyed patrons and their guests. At the top of the stairs, Rousteing and his friends edged into an empty, unlit room, where they could drop the formality of the dinner.

“Oh, my God, it was so *crazy*, the show,” Rousteing said.

“Did you see that the heel broke off

## WOMEN &amp; MONEY

## LIFE-STAGE PLANNING

Wealth  
Management

Financial-Advisor professionals from RBC Wealth Management address the questions of real women seeking to mature with their investments.

At heart, wealth management planning lies in the numbers, and increasingly, women are finding strength—and financial security of their own making—in those numbers. In a recent survey\*, 49 percent of women members of The New Yorker Opinion Leaders Panel characterized themselves as “financially conversant.” And for women who have hit their stride in their careers and are in their top earning years, that number shoots up to 55 percent.

But a growing financial comfort level doesn't mean women don't have questions when it comes to making sure their wealth management plans will deliver them to the life milestones they envision for themselves. The following is a financial Q&A representing a top concern of real women at every life stage, addressed by an experienced panel of RBC Wealth Management financial advisors from around the country. Follow along: female or male—and regardless of age—you're sure to see yourself somewhere in the financial mix.



> **JUST STARTING OUT** A YOUNG WOMAN ON THE RISE, FOCUSED ON BUILDING HER CAREER

## Q: HOW DO I BALANCE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF MAINTAINING MY LIFESTYLE, WHILE STILL HAVING AN EYE ON SAVING AND INVESTING?

**A: Ann Marie Etergino:** What you're really talking about here is setting good habits: having a rainy-day fund, contributing to your 401(k), and living within your means. Younger people must think about their need for retirement planning, even though, to them, that seems crazy. The benefits of starting early are simply too significant to ignore.

**Cinda Collins and Deborah Johnston:** Outline the 'have-to-have' versus the 'nice-to-have.' And it's important to save in a traditional savings account. We recommend that single individuals have up to six months of living expenses saved, and three months for couples.

**Debbie Juran:** The old maxim of the more time you have to invest the better the outcome is an absolute truth. I advise everyone starting out to absolutely begin contributing to their employer's retirement plan.

**Collins & Johnston:** After each pay increase, we advise increasing their annual contribution, with the ultimate goal of maxing out the annual contribution limit. In 2015, this amount is \$18,000 for an individual under 50.

**"Women are feeling more empowered to ask questions. I've noticed that in recent years, when new clients come in, they don't feel embarrassed about what they don't know."**

— DEBORAH JOHNSTON

## THE PREPARATION GAP

In the “Just Starting Out” category—young men and women on the rise and building their careers—women survey respondents feel less prepared than men in terms of how far into the future their financial resources will last them.



**Less than 1 year**  
**1-5 years**  
**6-10 years**  
**Don't plan in that detail**

**58%**  
**41%**  
**8%**  
**9%**

**24%**  
**58%**  
**3%**  
**23%**

**The gap closes by mid-life,** with women who are embarking on new chapters feeling more prepared than men.

\*Survey conducted May 2015 among The New Yorker Opinion Leaders panel, comprised of 5,000 members.

## RBC WEALTH MANAGEMENT ADVISORY PANEL

**Debbie Juran, AWM/CIMA**  
 Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor, Senior Consulting Group, Monterey, California

**Ann Marie Etergino, CIMA**  
 Managing Director and Financial Advisor, Senior Consulting Group, Chevy Chase, Maryland

**Cinda Collins, AWM**  
 Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor, Senior Consulting Group, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Deborah Johnston, AWM**  
 Senior Vice President and Financial Advisor, Senior Consulting Group, Minneapolis, Minnesota

AWM = Accredited Wealth Manager; CIMA = Certified Investment Management Analyst





HERO IMAGES

## > TOP OF HER GAME ESTABLISHED, SUCCESSFUL, AND FULLY INVESTED IN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

### Q: AS I GROW IN MY UNDERSTANDING OF INVESTING, HOW FAMILIAR SHOULD I BE WITH STOCKS AND FUNDS?

**A:** **Juran:** Research shows, over and over, that the single biggest determinant of investment outcomes is investor behavior, so I'm less concerned with clients becoming stock and fund pickers as I am with them engaging in behaviors that bring success. The keys are disciplined and consistent contributions to a retirement plan, not overspending, determining and planning for life goals, and, as women, keeping separate property and inheritance separate as you will lose them in a divorce. And then, yes, finding an advisor you can trust and collaborate with.

**Collins & Johnston:** If you are busy with a family and career, you should have a general understanding of investing—and then spend some time finding an advisor that fits well with you and your values and goals.

**Etergino:** Every woman should make sure she knows the basics. But, unless you have a specific interest, it's better to leave individual security selection to professionals. Instead, focus on things you can control, such as understanding what is important to you—budgeting, saving, spending, and long-term planning.

“Women can be intimidated by the markets, so it helps to take a step back and give a global overview: Things like emerging markets. **A stock is ownership, a bond is loaner-ship.**”

— CINDA COLLINS

### Q. HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED IN RETIREMENT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY?

**A:** **Etergino:** Retirement planning is all about making smart, confident choices—spending today versus saving for the future. Working with a financial advisor can help you establish realistic goals while measuring risks such as longevity, market volatility, and health-care costs, and aligning your investment strategy to meet these goals.

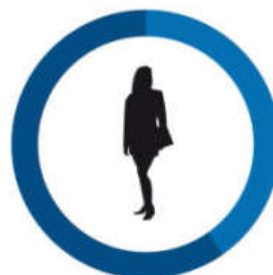
**Juran:** Given the uncertainty of inflation—which is a huge variable—a rule of thumb for how much you need is to plan on needing as much money as your highest earning years for an annual income goal. My philosophy is at least do *something*. The habit of saving for the future must begin early. Time and market volatility are your friends. With retirement-plan contributions, start

early and contribute every paycheck. Contribute at least the minimum to get you the employer match and increase the percentage you contribute as you receive pay increases.

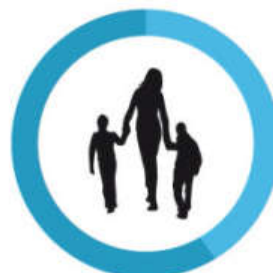
**Collins & Johnston:** If you spend about \$120,000 per year—or \$10,000 per month—you'll need about \$3,000,000 saved by retirement—assuming an age of 65—to sustain this lifestyle in retirement for the next 30 years, conservatively planning for a life expectancy age of 95. Ideally, half of your assets would be saved in a qualified retirement account and the other half saved in a non-qualified, taxable account. This allows clients some flexibility when it's time to draw down on their funds, meaning it won't always be a taxable event.

## A MEANS OF SUPPORT

Many New Yorker Opinion Leaders are women providing for themselves and others.



“I provide for myself.”  
43%



“I provide for 1–2 others.”  
46%



JOSE LUIS PELAEZ INC.

## > STARTING A NEW CHAPTER TURNING A CORNER IN LIFE AND EMBARKING ON A NEW CHALLENGE

# Q: AFTER A DIVORCE, WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO RECALCULATE YOUR FINANCIAL NEEDS FOR JUST ONE PERSON?

**A:** **Etergino:** Connecting your wealth to your purpose through a holistic financial plan is never more critical than after a meaningful life event. This is particularly true for women who may not have been actively involved in their day-to-day finances. Taking time to assess your personal goals and adjust your lifestyle to satisfy those goals is the first of many steps to maximizing your wealth after a divorce.

**Collins & Johnston:** We specialize in women in transition; what they're looking for is the flashlight to lead

them out of the tunnel. The first step is a high-level review of their new financial picture, followed by creating two helpful documents: A Net Worth Statement and a Statement of Cash Flow.

**Juran:** If you've been the non-working spouse, you're going to need to adjust to living on the settlement you get. If you, the woman, were the bigger earner, be prepared to be making spousal support payments. You've got to work with what you've got, and the numbers don't lie.

"Two big issues are that women can be math-phobic, and they're caretakers. Women will argue their husband's case to me. **They think speaking in their own voice is selfish.**"

— DEBBIE JURAN

## THE EMOTIONAL EQUATION

Charting the emotional responses men and women feel about their financial situations.



### EXCITEMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE:

26% 26%

### SATISFACTION:

38% 51%

### UNCERTAINTY:

45% 38%

### FEAR/ANXIETY:

23% 18%

## ON THE HORIZON

The next major life event women anticipate, by life stage:

### JUST STARTING OUT



Buying a new home

57%

### TOP OF HER GAME



Taking care of elderly parents

32%

### STARTING A NEW CHAPTER



Accommodating a major change in income

53%

### MINDFUL OF LEGACY



Putting a will together

29%



# Q. WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE FOR A GROWN CHILD?

INVESTING IN A BUSINESS? HELPING THEM BUY A HOME OR VEHICLE? FUNDING A NEST-EGG SAVINGS IN A TRUST?

**A:** **Etergino:** Support for a business, home, or retirement savings are generous and welcome gifts, but the one I would lean toward would be helping pay for children's and grandchildren's education. The return on that investment is unparalleled.

**Collins & Johnston:** If a goal is to fully fund a child or grandchild's education, setting up a 529 plan may make sense. Some wealthier clients may focus on establishing a trust for future wealth transfer.

**Juran:** If you have trained them to be financially astute, you're 99 percent there. Otherwise, my philosophy is, do what brings you joy. If that's helping with a house or car, do it. If it's investing in their business, you have a wonderful opportunity to show them how to make good investment decisions. You should insist that they have a well-thought-out business plan before you take out the checkbook.

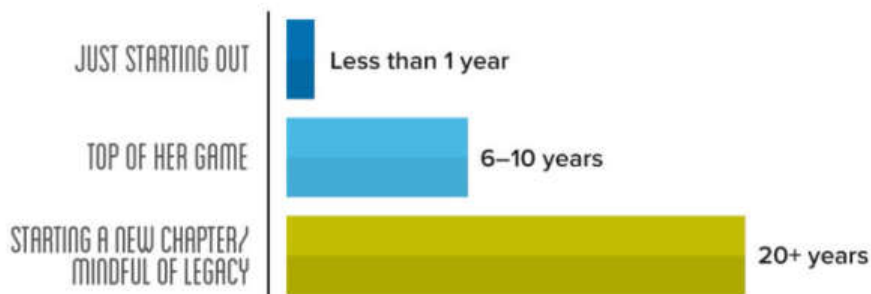
"In wealth management planning as a parent, it's just like oxygen masks on the plane: **You have to take care of yourself before you take care of your child.**"

— ANN MARIE ETERGINO



> **MINDFUL OF LEGACY** CAREFUL PLANNING HAS CREATED TIME, SPACE, AND RESOURCES TO MAKE A LASTING MARK

HOW MANY YEARS INTO THE FUTURE HAVE YOUR FINANCES PREPARED YOU FOR?



< VIEW BONUS VIDEO CONTENT ON YOUR TABLET OR MOBILE APP >

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\*Scorpio Partnership Global Private Banking KPI Benchmark 2014. This measurement includes all global RBC Wealth Management affiliates including the U.S. division.

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## MINIMUM WAGE

My mother and I are on the front porch lighting  
each other's cigarettes  
as if we were on a ten-minute break from our jobs  
at being a mother and son,  
just ten minutes to steal a moment  
of freedom before clocking back in,  
before putting the aprons back on, the paper hats,  
washing our hands twice and then standing  
behind the counter again,  
hoping for tips, hoping the customers  
will be nice, will say some kind word, the cool  
front yard before us and the dogs  
in the back yard shitting on everything.  
We are hunched over, two extras  
on the set of "The Night of the Hunter." I am pulling  
a second cigarette out of the pack,  
a swimmer rising from a pool of other swimmers.  
Soon we will go back inside and sit  
in the yellow kitchen and drink the rest of the coffee  
and what is coming to kill us will pour milk into mine  
and sugar into hers. Some kitchens  
are full of mothers and sons with no mouths, no eyes,  
and no hands, but our mouths are like the mouths of fire-  
eaters and our eyes are like the million  
eyes of flies. Our hands are like the hands of the living.

—Matthew Dickman

my shoe on the catwalk?" Jenner said.

"No!" Rouseing exclaimed.

"Yeah," Jenner said. "I had to finish on tiptoe—and no one noticed!"

The group tumbled, puppy-like, onto a velvet sofa. "Take a picture! Take a picture!" Rouseing cried. Laughing and pouting and sucking in their cheeks, they shot selfies and group portraits on their smartphones, then reluctantly went back down to the party, but not before posting shots to their Instagram feeds: Rouseing to his 1.2 million followers and Jenner to her thirty-three million, all hashtagged "BalmainArmy." It would be hours before the first reviews of the collection hit the newsstands.

The reviews, when they came out, ranged from tolerant to vicious. The collection had been as unrestrained as Rouseing's previous work—skin-tight minidresses, plunging necklines, beaded fringes, bondage straps, gilded stripes, thick embroidery—but this time it incorporated the influence of

Yves Saint Laurent, which, to Rouseing, meant flowing silk pants and ankle-length cardigans in the colors of a Palm Beach sunset. The *Vogue* international editor Suzy Menkes wrote, "The confidence exuding from this show was exceptional and put a fine spirit into clothes that shone as bright as the rippling lamé." But she was in the minority. Cathy Horyn, a critic-at-large for *New York*, likened the aesthetic to that of an Evel Knievel costume. Vanessa Friedman, the lead critic for the *Times*, called the collection an "orgy of 1980s excess," and added, archly, that "the clan Kardashian in the audience certainly seemed happy."

For critics like these, Rouseing, with his bedazzled clothes and his embrace of reality-TV stars, represents not just a threat to the tradition of French couture but the advent of a vulgar age. Rouseing, faced with this kind of criticism, says that he is bringing high fashion into the twenty-first century—in his designs, which he describes as

clothing for a "glamour army" of sexually confident young people, and also by erasing the distinction between luxury and popular culture. His strategy for the company, he says, is "globalization and democratization." He doesn't seem to worry about how those young democratic types would locate the funds for a seventeen-thousand-dollar dress.

In 2012, he became one of the first creative directors of a luxury label to launch a personal Instagram feed, which allows him to reach out directly to the "Balmaniacs" who follow him online. By the time a critic has seen a show and put a review in print, Rouseing's photos of his collection have amassed tens of thousands of "likes." The response is multiplied when a photo includes one of the stars of "Keeping Up with the Kardashians"—and especially if she posts the picture to her own Instagram, with a comment about how much she loves Balmain.

Since Rouseing took over, Balmain has expanded from an exclusive Paris house into one with global ambitions, with a new shop in London, a sprawling store opening this winter in New York, and plans for outlets in Los Angeles, Doha, Dubai, and Macau. This fall, Rouseing presents a collection with the "fast fashion" label H&M, which has previously collaborated with Karl Lagerfeld, Stella McCartney, and Alexander Wang. The partnership will provide Balmain with a barrage of promotion, including TV commercials, digital billboards, and magazine advertising. H&M has been controversial in recent years, as critics accuse it of producing clothes in Third World "sweatshops," and the new collection is built around cut-rate versions of Rouseing's garments. But Balmain expects that the collaboration will only improve its image. "It will make the Balmain customer see how everyone wants Balmain but can't have it," the label's C.E.O., Emmanuel Diemoz, says. "Also, so many people now are making money so fast, maybe the H&M customer will soon become the Balmain customer."

This June, Rouseing was in London to shoot a television commercial for the H&M-Balmain rollout. Not long before, Vanessa Friedman had written an article noting that the two companies had called their collaboration a "movement of



togetherness,” which she described as “almost terrifyingly cynical.” Rousteing was still agitated. During a break in the shoot, he hurried across the cavernous studio, where a crew of hundreds—photographers, makeup artists, seamstresses, set builders—were at work. Rousteing dropped into a chair beside Txampi Diz, Balmain’s public-relations director, and complained bitterly about Friedman.

Turning to me, Diz said, “That’s off the record.”

“Non,” Rousteing said. “If she hits at me, I can say, ‘I don’t like it.’” But then he grew philosophical: perhaps his Instagram followers wouldn’t care. “I can speak straight to my Balmain army, instantly, and I am making fashion for them,” he told Diz. “It is too bad for critics if they cannot understand this, but the truth is now that their critiques do not matter.”

When Diz disputed this, Rousteing interrupted: “Who would you rather

have in the front row? A celebrity or a critic?”

“There is room for both,” Diz said judiciously.

“No,” Rousteing said. “Only one. Celebrity or critic?”

“Room for both,” Diz repeated.

Rousteing, laughing, persisted until Diz gave up, craning his neck to gaze silently at the ceiling.

“You see?” Rousteing said.

Balmain’s headquarters and flagship store are situated off the Champs-Élysées, in an elegant six-story eighteenth-century building, the label’s home since it was launched, in 1945, by the couturier Pierre Balmain. The day after the dinner at Lapérouse, Rousteing walked into an airy second-floor meeting room to talk with the company’s sales team. Stylishly dressed young men and women sat at long tables, divided into territories: Asia,

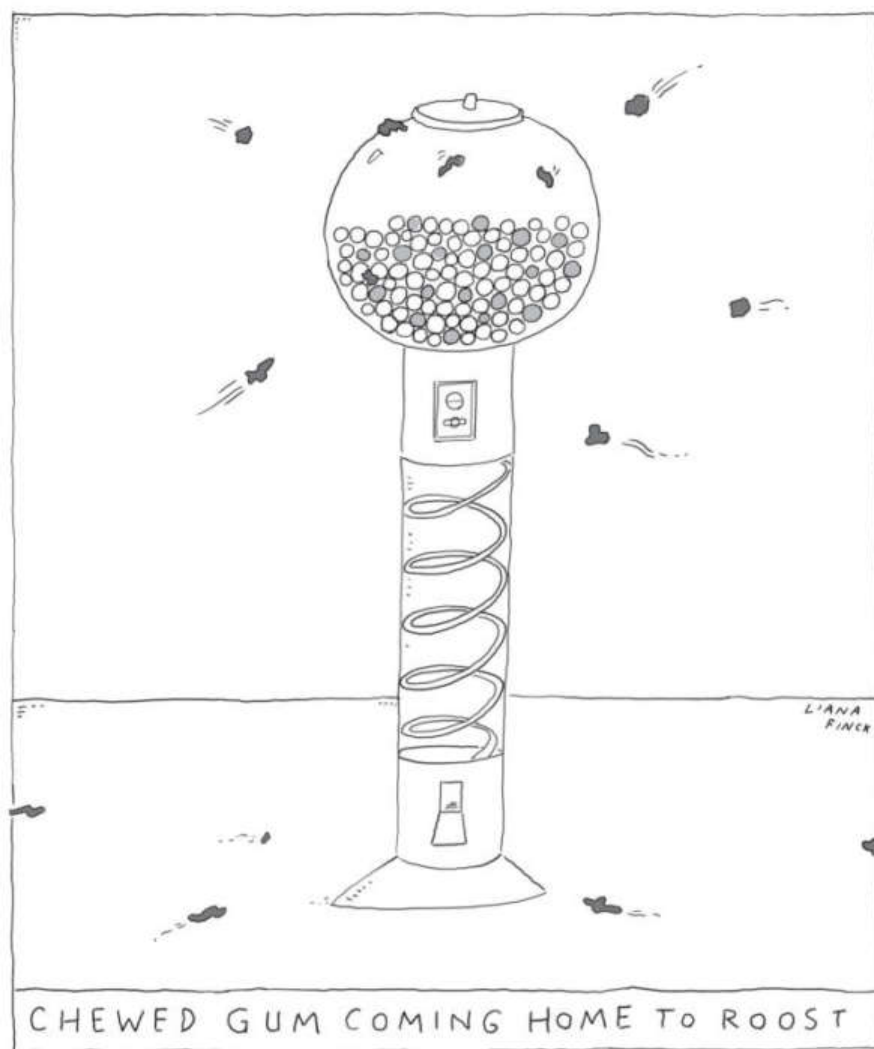
Europe, U.S.A., Brazil, the Middle East.

Rousteing was addressing his team at an uncertain moment in the world economy. In Russia, falling oil prices had devalued the ruble by forty-one per cent. In China, the government had clamped down on luxury goods. In France, the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attack had depressed the tourist trade and, at least temporarily, dulled the appetite for high-end shopping.

“So many things around us happen—we can’t always make the best-sellers,” Rousteing began. “But I’m really happy, because in this economy we are still really strong.” Although Russia remained one of the “problematics,” sales were up in the United States and in Brazil. He quickly turned the talk away from difficult news and to the “Balmain girl,” his ideal customer. Gesturing toward the racks holding his collection, he said, “This girl, as we can see, is really confident. She’s Asian, she’s black, she’s Russian, she’s European, she’s American—all the women of the world are part of our Balmain army!” He pulled out a minuscule beaded skirt. “You can find your Balmain for partying,” he said—then added, as the team chuckled, “You can find your Balmain for actually finding your rich man!”

Given Balmain’s prices, it would seem that the defining characteristic of the Balmain girl is that she is already rich. But, like every other luxury fashion label, Balmain relies not only on sales of the runway line but also on sales of accessories—such as scarves, bags, and perfume, which typically cost between a hundred and eight hundred dollars—and of its more accessible clothes, such as denim, T-shirts, and simple black blazers. The people who buy these things make up the main column of Rousteing’s army: young men and women who aspire to the endless summer of travel, sex, and money that Rousteing conjures on Instagram. “I don’t believe that all my 1.2 million followers can actually get Balmain, obviously,” Rousteing says. “My followers are *dreaming* of getting Balmain.”

Rousteing grew up in Bordeaux, in a comfortable but unglamorous home; his father directed the local port and his mother was an optician. An only child raised among indulgent relatives, he

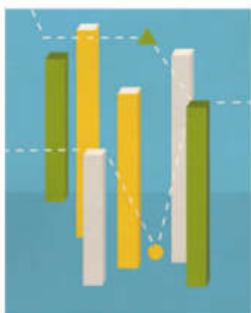


was unaware that he looked different from the rest of his family members, who are Caucasian. “You don’t think, Oh, my God, I’m not the same color,” he says. But, when Rousteing was eleven, a schoolmate called him a “bastard.” Soon after, his parents revealed that he had been adopted from a Paris orphanage at the age of five months.

At first, he imagined exotic origins for himself. “I thought maybe I came from an Egyptian prince and princess,” he says. At fifteen, he decided to find out about his biological parents, and learned that he was born under a French law that permitted a woman to give up a child to an orphanage without divulging her name. “She can say, ‘You won’t know me forever,’” Rousteing says. By then, he had started to entertain harsher possibilities: “Maybe my mom was a prostitute. Or maybe she was fifteen and she got raped.”

Afraid to learn more, he abandoned his search, and he believes that the indeterminacy about his origins helps explain his fascination with the transformative power of clothing. As a teen-ager, he favored what he calls a “glamour” look: suits, jackets, ties. He loved the work of Gianni Versace, Christian Dior, Cristóbal Balenciaga, and Karl Lagerfeld—although his budget allowed for shopping mostly at H&M. “With my clothes, I become a person,” he says. “When you don’t know where you come from, you need to show people you have your own way to identify yourself.”

After high school, Rousteing, at his parents’ urging, enrolled in a pre-law course. He lasted only a couple of months; he has said that he spent more time looking at the boys in the class than at his books. Rousteing left to study fashion in Paris, at the École Supérieure des Arts et Techniques de la Mode, dreaming of emulating the designers he idolized growing up. “I had all these superheroes in my mind,” he says. But the teachers counselled students to keep their goals modest. “You can do lingerie for the high street,” Rousteing recalled being told. “I said, ‘No, if I do fashion I want to do *that*’—be a creative director. “I won’t be happy to



sketch, like, socks.” After six months, he left for Italy, where he got a job at Roberto Cavalli, a luxury label known for sexy designs in animal prints and flamboyant colors. Rousteing was nineteen, and the job entailed making photocopies and organizing the desk of the label’s chief designer, Peter Dundas.

Dundas is from Norway—a place of “dark days and dark nights,” he says—and as a young man had fled to Italy, where he produced wildly extroverted designs. “Some people create a dream through fashion,” he told me. “Olivier was the same way. He has a very exuberant, happy way of looking at clothing. It’s a generous meal.” Such an aesthetic is rarely fa-

vored by fashion critics—who tend to exalt minimalists like Jil Sander and avant-garde deconstructionists like Rei Kawakubo—but it is popular among consumers, and Cavalli was an enduring commercial brand. For Rousteing, working there was an extension of fashion school. He studied the labels on fabric samples to learn the composition of textiles, and smuggled photocopies of Dundas’s sketches home to copy them. “I am like a sponge, to absorb the talents of everybody,” he says.

He was also tireless, Dundas recalls, working on collections past midnight—when he would hurry to his second job, dancing on a plastic cube in a night club. (“I was not naked,” he told the magazine *Out*. “It was a glamour club.”) He would dance until four-thirty, then rush off to see his boyfriend and get a little sleep before arriving back at Cavalli at 9 A.M. Dundas laughs ruefully at the memory. “Olivier was always a cute kid,” he says. After a few years, Rousteing was promoted to working under Dundas as a designer for the women’s and men’s ready-to-wear collections. But by 2009 he was ready to leave. “I love their style,” Rousteing told me, “but I think I needed also to learn who *I* am.”

**B**almain was in a similar process of reinvention. For decades after the Second World War, the house had enjoyed great success with its “Jolie Madame” style, a highly feminine silhouette

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defined by bouffant skirts, a cinched waist, and softly rounded shoulders. But after the founder died, in 1982, Balmain went into decline, and eventually filed for bankruptcy.

In 2005, the house hired a forty-one-year-old designer named Christophe Decarnin, who transformed its collections into a sybaritic rock-and-roll fantasy, with casual-looking clothes at formidable prices: low-slung ripped jeans, embellished with crystals, could cost fourteen hundred dollars; a torn T-shirt could be sixteen hundred. “It had this weird cachet because it was so frighteningly expensive,” the critic Cathy Horyn told me. “But it was also backed up by incredible workmanship. It was all lined beautifully—everything was perfect.”

Rousteing, fascinated by the sexuality of Decarnin’s work, wrote to him from Italy and was offered a job. He returned to Paris in 2009 and began designing womenswear for Balmain. Only eighteen months later, Decarnin, who had looked increasingly dishevelled and gaunt with each runway show, abruptly left—reportedly because of a nervous breakdown. Rousteing says that Decarnin, intensely shy, had merely hated the attention that came with success. But he adds that working under Decarnin taught him “the limits of fashion—like, how important it is to stop before crashing.”

When Rousteing was promoted to creative director, he was twenty-five—the youngest creative director of a luxury house since Yves Saint Laurent—and had only seven years of experience in the industry. “We were all taken by surprise,” Charlotte Stockdale, a stylist and creative consultant for Fendi, says. “We heard that it was this very young man, but we didn’t know anything about him.” His first runway show, a womenswear collection in September, 2011, retained Decarnin’s youthful spirit, but instead of the shredded jeans he clothed his models in trouser pants and tight, short dresses, patterned with intricate embroidery and gold embellishments. Stockdale, who attended the show, remembered, “Out came the most blinding, shockingly cool, young, *expensive* dresses I’ve ever seen.”

Rousteing says that he retained something of the house’s traditions.

“The proportion and silhouette are way different from the fifties and sixties,” he says. “But the Jolie Madame silhouette is very structured, the skirts are really tight on the waist. The sharpness is something I keep in my mind.” Where Pierre Balmain used precise draping and cutting to evoke a demure femininity, Rousteing used it to emphasize a woman’s swagger, opening necklines almost to the navel and raising hems to barely below the crotch. In his first year as creative director, sales rose twenty-five per cent.

In 2012, when Rousteing approached his bosses about starting an Instagram feed, luxury labels were wary of social media; their clients, they believed, were buying into an image of formality, elegance, poise. “When you deliver pictures to the market—especially Instagram pictures, which are immediate—then you take some risk,” Diemoz, the C.E.O., told me.

Rousteing had grown up using social media. “When you launch a song, you don’t just do a press conference to say, ‘I’m going to launch this song.’ You’re going to create a story, you’re going to show a part of life that has a sense of your song,” he says. Rousteing posted selfies that were clearly snapped on the run, his face blurred or poorly lit. There were pictures of him on the beach, looking like an off-duty singer in a boy band, and snapshots of late-night meals: Chicken McNuggets, hamburgers. “A lot of old-school fashion people were, like, ‘Oh, a creative director can’t show himself on the beach, because a creative director needs to maintain luxury,’” he told me. “But what does luxury mean in 2015?”

At first, the company’s executives monitored Rousteing’s feed closely. “They were hating it,” he says. They were particularly concerned about a photo of him in a hotel bed in Manhattan, seemingly naked, sleepy-eyed, with the hashtags “goodmorning” and “bigapple.” Rousteing recalls, “They were ‘Why are you showing yourself when you’re going to parties?’ ‘Why are you showing yourself before going to the office?’ I tell them, ‘I think people can be more interested in your clothes when they can see who you are.’”

Rousteing’s Instagram carries the headline “THIS IS MY REALITY,” but,

like everyone else's digital life, it is also a concoction. It never shows Rouseing working over sketches, struggling with the proportions of a jacket, or addressing his salespeople—activities that occupy most of his time. “I worked like a psycho person for the past four years,” he says. But even an assiduous follower online wouldn't be able to tell. Earlier this year, a detractor posted, “Olivier Rouseing spends more time taking selfies for Instagram than designing clothes for Balmain.” Rouseing gleefully reposted the complaint, along with a note that read, “I LOVE MY HATERS.”

For Rouseing, Instagram's virtues as a marketing tool are obvious: pictures can be snapped for free, posted in seconds, and then seen by potential customers all over the world. In a note to the audience at his spring-summer 2016 show, last week in Paris, he made a triumphal prediction: “Social media's embrace of Balmain will provide us with daily reminders of the excitement of those who have found a new way to bypass traditional gatekeepers.” Whether Instagram “likes” translate into sales is difficult to determine. But last spring, when Khloé Kardashian hosted an event at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, she wore one of Rouseing's dresses—a white sheath with transparent vertical panels—and images circulated online. Claire Distenfeld, the owner of Five Story, a boutique on the Upper East Side, told me that people flocked to her store looking for the dress. “We had it in size 6, 8, 10, 12—and they all sold,” she says. “The price was \$2,505.”

On the day of this year's Met Gala, a formal dinner held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rouseing ignored the suggested attire: “Chinese white tie,” in honor of the museum's exhibition “China: Through the Looking Glass.” Instead, he pulled on, over a low-necked shirt, a Balmain blazer covered with black rhinestones. He then used his iPhone to shoot a short video, saying how excited he was to dress his date for the evening, Justin Bieber. In the video, a shaky camera traverses a hotel room in midtown Manhattan, and then steadies as Bieber emerges from a bedroom. “Whassup?” he shouts. Rouseing fits Bieber with a black jacket, embroidered with intricately swirling gold drag-

ons, which had taken Balmain's artisans a month to fashion. “We gonna rock the red carpet!” Rouseing cries.

Rouseing says that he met Bieber through Kardashian's mother, Kris Jenner, and that, like all the people he uses as “brand ambassadors,” Bieber is a personal friend. “I love his songs,” he says, “and I love how he is like the American dream.” (Bieber is Canadian.) The two rode to the ball in a black S.U.V. swarmed by screaming girls. In the back seat, they sipped wine and lip-synched to “Where Are Ü Now,” a new dance track featuring Bieber on vocals.

The Met Gala is the most important, and forbidding, event on the fashion calendar. Designers and creative directors (usually men) squire their “dates” (usually women, dressed in clothes from the designer's collection) in a solemn procession along a red carpet from Fifth Avenue, up the grand staircase, and into the museum for a pre-dinner cocktail party as ceremonious as the U.N. General Assembly. On the red carpet, Rouseing and Bieber stopped every few paces to suck in their cheeks and pose for photos, many of which popped up on Instagram. They then made their way toward the vast, glassed-in room that houses the Temple of Dendur, where a crowd in strict formal attire had gathered for cocktails: Larry David, who sat on a low stone wall and avoided eye contact with everyone; a magnificently tanned Valentino; the “Daily Show” host Trevor Noah, who acknowledged some sympathy for Bieber. “I mean, the poor kid has had to grow up in public—can you imagine doing it?” he said. Rouseing and Bieber slouched in seconds before the call to dinner, hands in their pockets, shades on, as a film crew tracked them with handheld lights. They went straight to Kendall Jenner, and, heads close together, they laughed and whispered while the rest of the guests looked bemusedly at the camera crew.

Rouseing complained later that the ball was full of people who were “old in their thinking.” As one of a very few black creative directors of luxury labels, he sees it as a mission to provide minorities with greater visibility in fashion. Last year, he featured Rihanna as the face of Balmain, and solemnized Kardashian's marriage to West in an





Photograph signed and inscribed by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky to librettist Paul Collin, 1888. Estimate \$6,000 to \$9,000.

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ad campaign, which he described as an attempt to promote a racially mixed couple (whether or not this particular couple needed more promotion). Bringing Bieber was a social statement, he argued. “Having Justin on the red carpet was chic, modern, true, and sincere,” he told me. “If you’re authentic, it’s chic. Also, it’s modern because it’s two boys on the red carpet.”

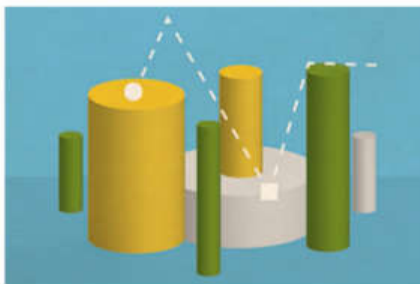
It was also, clearly, good marketing. Since Rousteing was appointed creative director, Balmain has become a familiar presence in popular culture. In Nicki Minaj’s 2014 hit “Anaconda,” she rapped, “He toss my salad like his name Romaine, and when we done, I make him buy me Balmain.” Kid Cudi, in his song “Balmain Jeans,” celebrated removing the jeans from his girlfriend. At first, this kind of attention was uncomfortable for a venerable house. “Evolution is never easy,” Diemoz said. “There is a kind of idea of what we are supposed to be. The first reaction of management is to be quite reluctant about any democratization and to maintain our classical position.” But sales have continued to grow twenty-five per cent a year, and Diemoz has stopped quibbling with Rousteing’s choices. “It’s through people like Justin Bieber that we’ll be able to reach millions of people,” he told me. “This is the same thing with the Kardashian family. People like or hate—it’s black or white. But, even if they hate, they will look!”

Sally Singer, the creative director of Vogue.com, believes that Rousteing’s short history in fashion has made him a target for critics. “Every designer uses celebrities—the Kardashians, Miley Cyrus, whoever,” she told me. “But, when a Marc Jacobs or a Karl Lagerfeld does it, it’s in the context of a long career where they’ve proved themselves, and so their use of a pop icon can look edgy, or like an interesting departure. But, when Olivier, this complete unknown, does it, he isn’t cut the same slack.”

Rousteing had just begun his third year as creative director at Balmain when he met Kim Kardashian, at the 2013 Met Gala. “She could see that I was stressed, because it’s a really important gala—you don’t want to do anything wrong,” Rousteing says. “It was the same for her, and we were supporting each other.” He insists that Kardashian is “super humble and

smart,” and that it is genuine affection that inspires him to use her in his ads.

Kris Jenner, too, has become a close friend and—as manager to her daughters Kim, Khloé, Kendall, and Kylie, all of whom promote Balmain—a business partner. “Kris is a *visionnaire*,” Rousteing told me. “She has the future in her hands, and she makes everything happen.” This May, she joined Rousteing at the Church of the Intercession, a stern-looking Gothic Revival building in Harlem, where Kendall and Kylie



were scheduled to shoot ads for Balmain’s fall collection. In a black Balmain motorcycle jacket, slicked black hair, and impenetrable black sunglasses, Jenner sat with Rousteing in the shade of the church as they waited for the set to be finished. Kendall arrived, and gazed out over the adjoining cemetery, with its sunlit expanse of headstones and overgrown crypts. “It’s *creepy*,” she said.

As Kendall prepared for the shoot, Kris Jenner spoke about Rousteing. “We talk about everything from his childhood to fashion, restaurants, travel, sports,” she said. “It’s a very well-rounded friendship.” Their business relationship is complex. According to Rousteing, the Kardashians appear in Instagram posts for free, but he pays them for print advertisements—and, when Kendall decided that she wanted to be a model, Balmain obligingly used her on the runway. Jenner said, “The first time he ever booked Kendall for a fashion show, I was doing the biggest happy dance!” Last year, Kendall reportedly made four million dollars from modelling.

In a crypt below the church, the set builders had installed an ersatz Turkish bath, and as Rousteing and Jenner arrived a man with a hose was spraying mist to enhance the atmosphere. Pascal Dangin, the shoot’s creative director, said that Rousteing intended to “bring back

some of that sexuality of the seventies, early eighties. Helmut Newton. With beautiful girls. Not waify, androgynous types.” The models arrived, dressed for the shoot. Kendall wore a long black cardigan with vertical gold stripes and matching wide-legged pants, her eyes raccooned in smoky makeup. Kylie, who was then seventeen, wore a fringed mini-dress, black stockings, and stilettos.

The set builders had installed a rough stone ledge by the bath, and Kendall draped herself on it, while Kylie knelt alongside, looming over her. The photographer, Mario Sorrenti, a man in his early forties, circled and snapped, muttering encouragement. Jenner, on hand to chaperone, kept out of camera range, breaking in occasionally to give Kylie a sip of water from a bottle.

“Ow!” Kylie said, grimacing. She straightened up and complained that kneeling on the edge of the bath was hurting her leg. Her mother fetched a small foam pad, and Kylie lowered herself back into position. Rousteing whispered in Sorrenti’s ear.

“Put your hand on Kendall’s breast,” Sorrenti said, “as if you’re pushing her away.”

Kylie laid her hand on her sister’s chest.

“Kendall,” Sorrenti said, “grab Kylie’s fringe.”

Kendall grasped the fringe hanging from Kylie’s shoulder, as if she were pulling her sister down on top of her. Sorrenti fired shots as the models stared, expressionless, into his camera. He told them to look into each other’s eyes, and they complied. “A little closer,” he said. They moved their faces together until they nearly touched. “Great!” he said. “That’s great!”

During a break, Kendall and Kylie, in white bathrobes and slippers, sat thumbing their iPhones, while Rousteing talked about the shoot. When it was suggested that the photos had a provocative subtext, he put on a puzzled look. The theme, he said, was “sisters.” He went on, “What I love about fashion, it’s not only the clothes. It’s putting a vision, and I think the sisters’ story—the love between a family—is really something that is going to help fashion. To create beautiful stories in different ways.” Jenner, expressionless behind her dark glasses, looked on and nodded. ♦

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# THE POPULIST PROPHET

*Bernie Sanders has spent decades attacking inequality. Now the country is listening.*

BY MARGARET TALBOT

If you attended a Bernie Sanders rally this summer, when his seemingly quixotic Presidential campaign began gathering force, you might have noticed a few surprising things about the crowd. One was the scarcity of non-white faces—a problem that the campaign would soon be confronted by, very publicly. Another was how many young people were turning out to see an irascible seventy-four-year-old senator from Vermont. But that's a little like being surprised that some millennials appreciate Neil Young or Joni Mitchell at a time when it's easy to find songs from different decades in a promiscuous jumble online. Young people who like Bernie Sanders like him because he sounds like an old record. He's been talking about the injustices done to working people by unequal income distribution for more than forty years. His voice, often hoarse from his habitually loud and impassioned speeches, even has the crackle of worn vinyl.

In Portland, Maine, on an evening in July, the line to see Sanders looped around the Cross Insurance Arena. Sanders's popularity had clearly been exceeding his own expectations. In a conversation this summer, he recalled an event in Minneapolis: "I was blown away. We were driving in, we saw these lines of people snaking down the sidewalk. 'Jesus, what is that? There's a ballgame going on?'"

At the Portland rally, I met a group of five friends who were drawn to Sanders because of his commitment to banish money from politics: he has sharply criticized the Supreme Court's 2010 decision, in *Citizens United*, to permit unlimited campaign spending by corporations, and has lamented the outsize influence exerted by billionaires. Several of the friends praised Sanders's pledge to raise the federal minimum wage to fifteen dollars an hour. One

member of the group, Erin Kiley, a millennial who owns Portland Flea-for-All, a marketplace of vintage and artisanal goods, said that she developed "a huge political crush on Bernie" in 2010, after Sanders delivered an eight-and-a-half-hour speech on the Senate floor to protest the extension of tax cuts instituted during the Presidency of George W. Bush. Sanders's gruffness, didacticism, and indifference to appearances—both he and his wife, Jane, told me how much he loathes shopping—are central to his appeal. All the friends described Sanders as "authentic," a word that many people would be hesitant to apply to Hillary Clinton. Kiley acknowledged that Sanders's unvarnished qualities might turn off some voters, but noted that in the current election cycle "the whole spectrum of candidates is less schmoozy, polished, and warm." She went on, "Everyone seems a little off the wall. Howard Dean was thrown off the national stage for being angry. But people like Trump *because* he's an asshole and says whatever he wants." Kiley's friend Dawn York, who runs a vintage-clothing shop, said, "Most candidates are robotic and rehearsed." She saw "a real person in Bernie."

Sanders has been known as a democratic socialist for decades. This didn't matter much to Kiley or York, or to most other Sanders supporters I met during the next few weeks; mainly, they were impressed that he hadn't shed the term. York thought that, because of Sanders and his "social-media-driven fans," socialism was "getting a bit of a P.R. makeover." She noted that sites like Reddit and Twitter were circulating videos of "Bernie explaining why he identifies as a socialist, and what it means to him, in a really positive light." She added, "The word had a retro connection to Communism and was originally thrown at him as a damning label

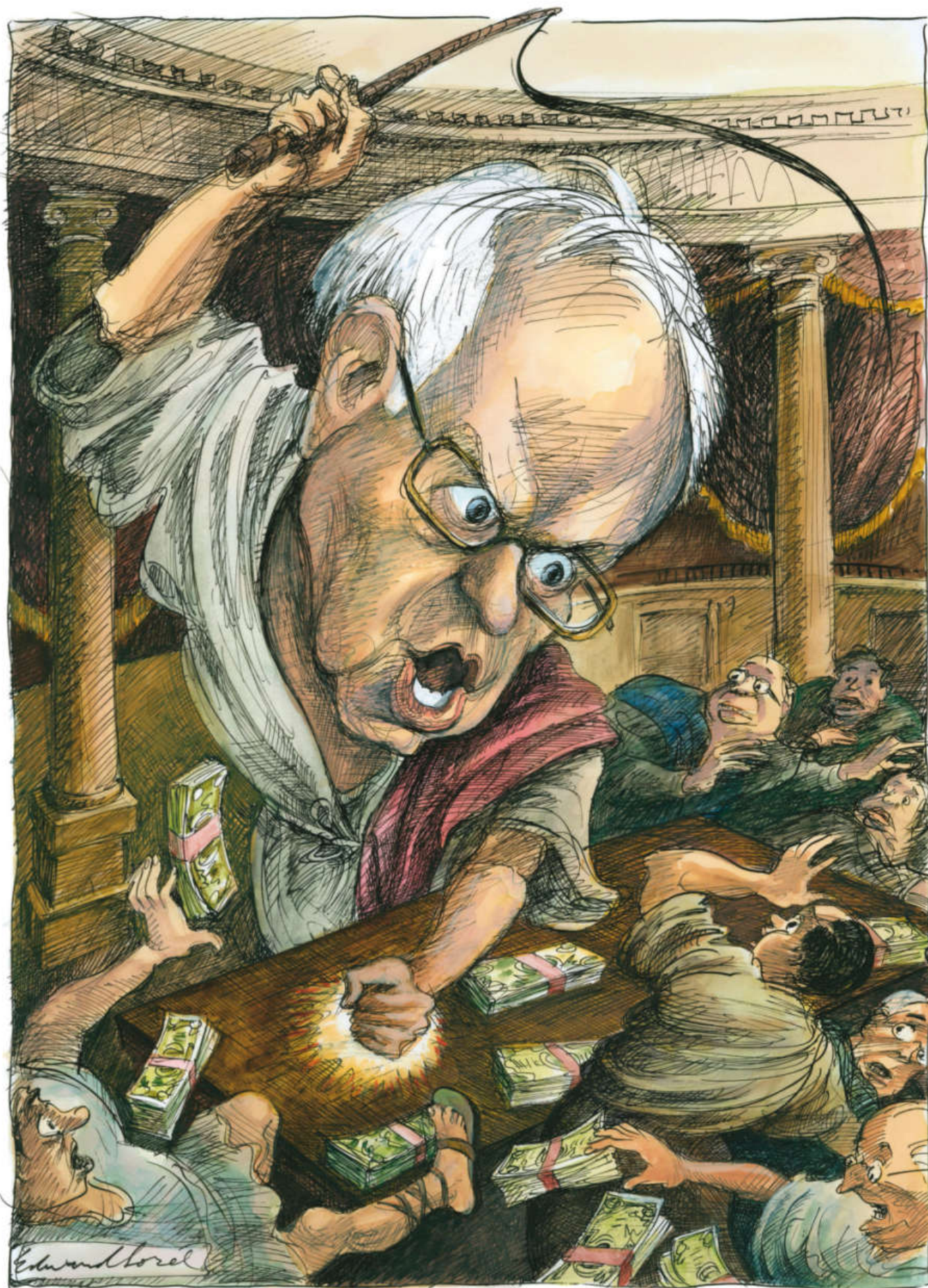
by his opponents. But for his supporters it isn't a deterrent."

A 2011 Pew Research Center survey found that, among voters under the age of thirty, forty-nine per cent had a positive view of socialism. (Only forty-six per cent had a positive view of capitalism.) Peter Dreier, a professor of politics at Occidental College, who has written about Sanders, says that younger voters "may not be willing to entertain a whole new system, but they are open to a pretty profound critique of the current one. They're not as naïve as Americans used to be during the Cold War—they know that there are varieties of capitalism, that there is social democracy in Scandinavia and Canada, where the government plays a bigger role in regulating corporations and in expanding the safety net."

At a recent San Francisco gathering for Sanders, I met Derek Zender, a twenty-three-year-old marketing student. He told me that his parents, who live in Orange County, dismissed Sanders as "a decrepit old socialist who means well but doesn't understand how the world works." Zender thought they were overlooking the fact that "many American institutions—Social Security, unions, Medicare, the postal service—have elements of socialism."

In Portland, Sanders took the stage, a little hunched in a gray suit jacket. His flyaway white hair was largely subdued, but his face turned pink with exertion as he delivered an hour-long speech, during which he did not use a teleprompter and barely consulted a sheaf of loose yellow papers on the lectern. "America today is the wealthiest country in the history of the world," he declared. "But most people don't *know* that, most people don't *feel* that, most people don't *see* that—because almost all of the wealth rests in the hands of a tiny few." Sanders signals his moral





*Sanders's young fans combine admiration for his progressive conviction with a slightly condescending fondness for cranky old people.*

ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD SOREL

THE NEW YORKER, OCTOBER 12, 2015

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ferocity by choosing words like “horrific” and “abysmal” and sonically italicizing them, as in “This *grotesque* level of income and wealth inequality is *immoral*.” He was born in Brooklyn, and his unreconstructed borough growl reminds voters that he stands apart from the “oligarchy.” His hand gestures are as emphatic as a traffic cop’s. When he delivers speeches, he’ll often jab his finger at the lectern, as though he were enumerating the plagues at Passover.

Most of his policy proposals have to do with helping working people and reducing the influence of the wealthy. He would like to break up the big banks, create jobs by rebuilding infrastructure, and move toward public funding of elections—and provide free tuition at public universities. (This program would be subsidized, in part, by a tax on Wall Street speculation.) He wants to end the “international embarrassment of being the only major country on Earth which does not guarantee workers paid medical and family leave.” In the speeches I heard, Sanders rarely discussed foreign policy, though he spoke with conviction about climate change and the need for the U.S. to set an example for Russia, India, and China by using fewer fossil fuels. He tends to sound both doleful and optimistic, like a doctor who has a grave diagnosis to deliver—and no time for small talk—but is convinced that he can help his patient heal.

Huck Gutman, one of Sanders’s close friends, is an English professor at the University of Vermont; from 2008 to 2012, he served as Sanders’s chief of staff in the Senate. “It doesn’t matter what issue comes up—Bernie understands that the fundamental issue for Americans is economic,” Gutman said. “His record on abortion, on gay marriage, on a great number of things has been very good and very liberal, but he never sees those as the central issues. The central issue is: Are people doing O.K., or are a small number of people ripping them off?”

Despite this abiding interest, Sanders does not seem to have immersed himself that deeply in the extensive lit-

erature on inequality. When I spoke with him in his Senate office, I asked him how his ideas on economic fairness were formed. “No one can answer that,” he replied. “How were *your* ideas formed?” He did not particularly warm to discussing the theories of such economists as Joseph Stiglitz and Thomas Piketty. (Gutman told me, “I read a third of Piketty’s book. I don’t think Bernie would read a page of it.” Sanders was interested less in academic arguments, Gutman said, than in hard numbers that “exemplify the disparities he sees and feels and hears about from people.”) Sanders dutifully mentioned that the economist Stephanie Kelton is an adviser to the Democrats on the Senate Budget Committee, of which he is the ranking member, but he was ardent in his admiration for Pope Francis, who has condemned the “economy of exclusion.” Sanders called the Pope “an extraordinary figure,” adding, “My God, he came along right at the time we need him!”

After speeches, Sanders spars about issues with voters or reporters. Garrison Nelson, a political scientist at the University of Vermont, who has known him for decades, says that if Sanders is walking down the street in Burlington “and somebody yells at him Bernie will talk to him—‘What’s the matter? Whadd’ya mean?’” He also understands the necessity of the selfie dance, maneuvering quickly into place and smiling briefly. Sanders does not excel,

however, at the middle ground of casual, friendly conversation. He has no gift for anecdote. When talking to voters, Hillary Clinton has perfected the head-cocked semblance of keen interest; it’s clear when Sanders becomes bored. Nelson told me, “Bernie’s the last person

you’d want to be stuck on a desert island with. Two weeks of lectures about health care, and you’d look for a shark and dive in.” Nelson has voted for him many times.

Paula Routly, who is the publisher of *Seven Days*, a popular weekly in Burlington, told me a story that captured the counterintuitive Sanders charm. In 2012, she hosted a gathering of

alternative-newspaper publishers, and tried to show them Vermont at its most distinctive. One evening, Jerry, of Ben & Jerry’s, scooped ice cream; on another, Senator Sanders stopped by a group dinner. As Routly recalls, “There were no niceties or glad-handing before he launched into a brief but impassioned rant, tailored specifically for our group. He told us we were doing a great job of covering the arts but a lousy one reporting on economic issues. Message delivered—he didn’t want to meet anyone or eat anything or answer any questions. He was out of there.” Everyone loved it. “He only talks to people in one register, but it’s a very effective one,” Routly said.

Though Sanders is steadfastly earnest, the youthful enthusiasm for him often partakes of irony. Whimsical buttons feature the slogan “Feel the Bern,” and Tumblr is full of memes that play up the contrast between Sanders’s age and his popularity with hipsters. It’s similar to the way that some admirers of Ruth Bader Ginsburg have taken to calling her the Notorious R.B.G. Both fandoms combine admiration for progressive conviction with a slightly condescending fondness for cranky senior citizens. Rich Yeselson, a contributing editor at the left-wing journal *Dissent*, told me, “The sort of detached, post-Jon Stewart generation—they’re the ones putting inverted commas around what Bernie stands for. ‘Look at this grumpy old Jewish socialist from Brooklyn!’ It’s not cynical, though—they really believe in what he’s saying.”

Sanders’s message is particularly potent for young people who are struggling financially. Several weeks after the rally, I wrote to Dawn York, and she said that she had been thinking about “how refreshing it was to have someone point out to us that, as hard-working Americans, some things aren’t a privilege, they are a right. . . . I’m self-employed, I started my own business three and a half years ago, and my husband works full-time for Whole Foods—and we barely get by. We own a home, we both graduated from college, and we work more than forty hours a week, and we can barely put oil in our heating tanks in the winter. We have no savings and no way to financially



handle any hiccups that may come our way. And I had to be *reminded* that it shouldn't be that way."

Garrison Nelson describes Sanders as being "more from the nineteen-thirties left than the sixties one." In June, when NPR's David Greene pressed Sanders on whether he embraced the phrase "Black Lives Matter," the Senator got irritated. "It's too easy for quote-unquote liberals to be saying, 'Well, let's use this phrase,'" he said. "We need a massive jobs program to put black kids to work *and* white kids to work *and* Hispanic kids to work. So my point is, is that it's sometimes easy to worry about which phrase you're going to use. It's a lot harder to stand up to the billionaire class."

Sanders does not argue that greater economic equality would end racism, but for most of his career he has subsumed discussions of race under class. Van Jones, a criminal-justice reformer and a former Obama adviser, derides that approach as "trickle-down justice"—and told Salon in August that he had been "warning the white populists in the Party, behind the scenes, for several months, that their continued insistence on advancing a color-blind, race-neutral populism was going to blow up in their faces."

On July 18th in Phoenix, Sanders appeared at Netroots Nation, an annual conference of progressive activists. Before he began his remarks, demonstrators flooded the room and began chanting "Black lives matter!"

After taking the stage, Sanders told the moderator, "Whoa, let me talk about what I want to talk about for a moment!" A few minutes later, when protesters again interrupted the proceedings, he addressed them directly: "Black lives, *of course*, matter. I spent fifty years of my life fighting for civil rights and for dignity! But if you don't want me to be here that's O.K. I don't want to outscram people."

A week later, in his Senate office, Sanders sounded chastened. "The issues these young people raised are enormously important," he said. The video showing the arrest of Sandra Bland, the African-American woman who died in a Texas jail, had just been released, and Sanders seemed shaken. "It impacted my night's sleep," he said. "I don't sleep that great, and it made it even worse." He went on,



*"This part of the ride always creeps me out."*

"It's hard to imagine if Sandra Bland was white she would have been thrown to the ground and assaulted and insulted." Sanders, speaking more broadly about police violence directed at black people, said, "I plead guilty—I should have been more sensitive at the beginning of this campaign to talk about this issue."

On July 25th, Sanders addressed the annual convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in Baton Rouge. "I'm aware that many of you don't know me very well," he said. His tone was friendlier than usual, and he even made a joke: "I was the best *and* worst congressman Vermont had." (Vermont has only one.) One of the convention's listed sponsors was Koch Industries, and it was the first time I saw Sanders give a speech in which he did not inveigh against the company's billionaire owners, who lavishly support conservative causes. He had folded in a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., though, which worked well for him: "Now our struggle is for genuine equality, which means economic equality. For we know that it isn't enough to integrate lunch counters. What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?"

In August, Sanders's campaign issued a racial-justice platform that recom-

mended police reform, federal funding for police body cameras, a ban on for-profit prisons, and the elimination of mandatory-minimum jail sentences. The platform also included a broad defense of voting rights. (Among other things, Sanders proposes making Election Day a federal holiday.) The document is divided into sections called "Physical Violence," "Political Violence," "Legal Violence," and "Economic Violence," strongly echoing the language and priorities of Black Lives Matter. At the same time, the platform reasserted Sanders's core philosophy: "We must simultaneously address the structural and institutional racism which exists in this country, while at the same time we vigorously attack the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality which is making the very rich much richer while everyone else—especially those in our minority communities—are becoming poorer."

Van Jones said of Sanders, "He's shown tremendous character in his willingness to engage and grow and change." But Vermont is ninety-five per cent white, and Sanders needed to establish stronger bonds with black voters. No African-American leader, Jones observed, would be surprised to get a call from the Clintons. Sanders was "a reliable civil-rights vote, but not somebody who has been connected to



these communities, to these kids and their neighborhoods. He's not showing up to the funerals."

American politicians know the power of a personal story. The first lines of Jeb Bush's biography on his official campaign site describe how he met his wife, Columba: "My life changed forever when I was a young man on an exchange program in León, Guanajuato, Mexico. Across a plaza, I saw a girl. She spoke little English, and my Spanish was a work in progress. But for me, it was love at first sight." Hillary Clinton's official online biography sounds like one of those books about great Americans aimed at young readers: her father's drapery business and "rock-ribbed" Republicanism, her family's Methodism, and her youthful turn as a Girl Scout all get their due. Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts senator whose critiques of income inequality presaged Sanders's Presidential campaign, often speaks of her parents' economic hardship to help explain her values today.

Sanders's campaign Web site lists his educational history, says that he is married to Jane Sanders and that they have four children and seven grandchildren, and mentions that he worked as "a carpenter and a documentary filmmaker" before entering politics. That's it for personal stuff.

There's something admirable about Sanders's reluctance to attribute his political beliefs to autobiography: he doesn't want voters thinking that his commitment to redistributive economics stems from anything other than a deep-seated sense of fairness. He has neither the conventional politician's instinct for sharing relatable details nor the contemporary left's reverence for personal testimony. Still, he's running for President, and so he has reluctantly cracked open the door to his private life, even if his supporters are drawn to him, in part, because of that reluctance.

When I asked Sanders a question about his early years, he sighed with the air of a man who knows he can no longer put off that visit to the periodontist. "I understand," he said. "I really do. For people to elect a President, you've got to know that person—you've

got to trust them." He insisted that he was happy to talk about his life. But he couldn't resist sermonizing first: "When I talk about a political revolution, what I'm talking about is how we create millions of decent-paying jobs, how we reduce youth unemployment, how we join the rest of the world, major countries, in having paid family and sick leave. I know those issues are not *quite* as important as my personal life." And then, unnecessarily: "I'm being facetious."

Sanders did say that two aspects of his upbringing had exerted a lasting influence. One was coming from a family that never had much money. And the other was growing up Jewish—less for the religious content than for the sense it imbued in him that politics mattered. Sanders's father was a Polish Jew who, at the age of seventeen, came to America shortly after his brother, and struggled through the Depression in Brooklyn. By the time Sanders was born, in 1941, his father was working as a paint salesman. Sanders had an older brother, Larry, and their mother stayed home, like most of the women in their lower-middle-class corner of Flatbush. He went to public schools, including James Madison High School, an incubator of civic talent, from which Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Senator Chuck Schumer also graduated. He didn't make the school's championship basketball team—a deep disappointment—but he ran cross-country, and feels that this activity accounts for some of his formidable stamina today.

"There was tension about money," Sanders said of his family. They lived in a three-and-a-half-room rent-controlled apartment, and his mother pined for a house. "It wasn't a question of putting food on the table. It was a question of arguing about whether you buy this or whether you buy that. You know, families do this. I remember a great argument about drapes—whether we could afford them. And I remember going with my mother when we had to buy a jacket. We went to literally fifteen different stores to buy the damned cheapest—I mean, the best deal." He went on, "I do know what it's like when the electric company shuts off the electricity and the phone company shuts off the phone—all that stuff. So, for

me, to talk to working-class people is not very hard."

I spoke with a few of Sanders's contemporaries who had grown up in the same neighborhood, and their memories were rosier: they recalled kids playing stickball on safe, familiar streets until their parents called them home for dinner. But Sanders rarely communicates in the key of nostalgia. He'll talk about how the "great American middle class" is being hollowed out, but unlike some populists he doesn't dwell lovingly on the nineteen-fifties, when high-paying manufacturing jobs, union membership, and the G.I. Bill allowed single-earner families to prosper. That's a political strength, because there are many people—African-Americans, above all—for whom the fifties cannot be recalled as an idyll.

Sid Ganis, a Hollywood producer who grew up in the same building as Sanders, described their neighborhood as an enclave of "ordinary secular Jews," adding, "Some of us went to Hebrew school, but mainly it was an identity in that it got us out of school on Jewish holidays." Sanders told me that, in the aftermath of the Second World War, his family "got a call in the middle of the night about some relative of my father's, who was in a displaced-persons camp in Europe someplace." Sanders learned that many of his father's other relatives had perished. Sanders's parents had been fundamentally apolitical, but he took away a lesson: "An election in 1932 ended up killing fifty million people around the world."

Sanders's close friend Richard Sugarman, an Orthodox Jew who teaches religious studies at the University of Vermont, said, "He's not what you would call rule-observant." But, Sugarman added, "if you talk about his Jewish identity, it's strong. It's certainly more ethnic and cultural than religious—except for his devotion to the ethical part of public life in Judaism, the moral part. He does have a prophetic sensibility." Sugarman and Sanders were housemates for a while in the seventies, and Sugarman says that his friend would often greet him in the morning by saying, "We're not crazy, you know," referring to the anger they felt about social injustices. Sugarman would respond, "Could you say good morning first?"

Sanders attended Brooklyn College for a year, then transferred to the University of Chicago, where he joined the Young People's Socialist League and the Congress on Racial Equality. He also took part in protests for the desegregation of the Chicago public schools and of university-owned housing. Jim Rader, a friend who first met him in Chicago, recalls that Sanders was a "leader of the civil-rights movement on campus." Sanders, who received a political-science degree in 1964, has said that he was a mediocre student because he found the classroom boring and irrelevant—and that he learned "infinitely more on the streets and in the community."

By the time Sanders graduated, both his parents had died, and his brother had moved to England. (Larry Sanders, who became a social worker and a Green Party councillor, lives in Oxford.) Jane Sanders told me that it had taken her a long time to realize quite how "alone in the world" her future husband had been during his late teens and early twenties. He did a stint on a kibbutz in Israel, worked as an aide at a psychiatric hospital, taught in a Head Start program, and had a carpentry business with a few other guys in New York. It was called Creative Carpentry, and Rader says that it was accurately named: "They advertised in the *Village Voice*, but didn't know much about carpentry. They'd go to the hardware store to buy supplies, and ask the clerk how to do the repairs they'd been hired to do."

Sanders got married for the first time, to a woman named Deborah Shiling, just after college, and they took a road trip from New York to Vermont, where Sanders had never been. The couple ended up buying eighty-five acres of wooded land near Montpelier, for twenty-five hundred dollars. They had preceded the waves of back-to-the-land hippies. Sanders told me, convincingly, "I *wasn't* a hippie." He'd been enchanted by the thought of living in lush, green Vermont ever since he and his brother had collected some travel brochures touting the state's farms.

Sanders and Shiling soon divorced. (She eventually became a wine and cheese buyer for a Vermont food co-op.) In 1969, he had a son, Levi, with

Susan Campbell Mott, a girlfriend. In July, *Politico* reported that Levi was not the product of his first marriage, as many people had assumed, in an article titled "Bernie Sanders Has a Secret." It came as a surprise to reporters who'd covered Sanders for years in Vermont, but it wasn't the sort of revelation likely to scandalize his supporters in 2015.

Sanders wore his social conscience on his sleeve, but few people who knew him in the sixties and seventies would have predicted that he would become a leading candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination. In those days, he occupied himself by writing freelance articles—critiques of the stultifying effects of office work or the social-control mechanism of television—and by making very low-budget educational filmstrips. It's safe to say that had Sanders stuck with that career he would not have given Ken Burns a run for his money. One filmstrip, a portrait of Sanders's hero, the socialist Eugene V. Debs, was rendered with static images that remained on the screen for a good long while. Sanders himself voiced Debs, an Indiana native, making him sound like a guy from Flatbush. A narrator chided viewers that if they were like the average American "who watches television forty hours a week" they would know "such important people as Kojak and Wonder Woman" and

"have heard about dozens of different kinds of underarm spray deodorants" but would likely never have heard of Debs. (Another cultural foray of Sanders's that makes you glad he stuck with politics: a 1987 cassette tape in which he talk-sings folk songs, William Shatner style. Imagine "This Land Is Your Land" recited, in stentorian tones, over reggae-style guitar.)

People who knew Sanders when he was in his thirties tend to share stories about how broke and frugal he was. Rader told me that when Sanders first bought land in Vermont, and was still living part time in New York, he sometimes camped out in the new property's only shelter: a maple-sugar shack. He had devised his own equivalent of Sterno, which his friends dubbed Berno. "It was a roll of toilet paper soaked in lighter fluid inside a coffee can," Rader said. "He'd cook over that."

In 1971, Rader invited Sanders to a meeting of Vermont's left-wing Liberty Union Party, in Plainfield. Sanders brought his son along, and there's a photograph of them at the meeting: Sanders is skinny, serious, with a luxuriant head of curls, uninhibited sideburns, and Buddy Holly glasses; his towheaded toddler sits in his lap. The organizers asked if anyone would run for the Senate, and Sanders, one of the willing few, got the nod. It was the beginning of



"The next number is also birdsong."



his political career, though he shared the fate of most Liberty Union candidates: he lost by an enormous margin. During the next ten years, he ran twice for senator and twice for governor, and never got more than six per cent of the vote. Nevertheless, he discovered that he had an appetite for campaigning—and a keen desire to hold elected office. “The difference between Bernie and most of the lefties is Bernie wants to win,” Garrison Nelson said. “Most lefties don’t want to win, because if you win you sell out your purity.”

In 1980, Sanders’s friend Richard Sugarman suggested that he try for mayor of Burlington. Locals were disenchanted with the five-term incumbent, a Democrat named Gordon Paquette. Sanders ran as an Independent, and won by ten votes. Even in Vermont, it was unusual to elect a socialist in the time of Ronald Reagan; Sanders was a thirty-nine-year-old man who didn’t own a suit. As Paula Routly told me, “Monied interests were shaking in their boots at first.”

Yet Sanders turned out to be a popular and effective mayor, and more pragmatic than some might have predicted.

True, he travelled to Nicaragua, where he met with Daniel Ortega and found a sister city for Burlington. (Vermont reporters dubbed the mayor and his coalition the Sandernistas.) But he also presided over economic development that transformed the city into a hipper, more forward-looking place—one of those small cities that appear on lists of the most livable. And he did so without the kind of wrenching gentrification that he abhorred. His administration devised creative solutions for preserving affordable housing, including a community land trust that enabled low-income residents to buy homes. It became a model for other cities. Sanders also resisted a developer’s plan to turn the derelict Lake Champlain waterfront into a cluster of high-rises, promising instead public access and open space. Today, the waterfront has a park, a bike trail, a science center, a community boathouse, and limited commercial development. He created a youth office, an arts council, and a women’s commission, and during his tenure minor-league baseball came to Burlington. Business leaders learned, Nelson said, “not to fear him.” Jim Condon, a Vermont state

legislator and a former reporter who used to cover Mayor Sanders, wrote of him recently, “He got a lot done, but not through the art of gentle persuasion. Bernie’s style was top-down and confrontational.” Still, he was reelected three times.

Sanders met Jane O’Meara Driscoll, a community organizer nine years his junior and a divorced mother of three young children, when she invited him to a debate during his first mayoral campaign. After he was elected, he named her the director of a new office dedicated to improving the lives of kids and teen-agers in Burlington. They were married in 1988, and spent what even Sanders admits was “a strange honeymoon,” in the Soviet Union, finalizing a sister-city relationship with the city of Yaroslavl. Jane has worked closely with him ever since, on a volunteer basis—she was his chief of staff for a year in the House, and has handled his press relations at various times. Along the way, she had served as the provost of Goddard College, in Plainfield, where she had earned a bachelor’s degree in social work, and, later, the president of Burlington College. All four children in the Sanders family are now grown. Levi Sanders works as a paralegal at Boston Legal Services; Heather directs the Sedona Yoga Festival with her husband; Carina started a wood-working school, and has served as a state legislator in Vermont; Dave is a senior executive at a quintessential Vermont company, Burton Snowboards.

Jane typically accompanies her husband on the Presidential campaign trail. She smiles more easily than he does, and looks approachable in her slacks and patterned tunic tops. In August, we met in Burlington, and though Jane was nursing a campaign-trail cough, she was animated about her husband: “I feel more, every day, that he can win. My kids find it really frustrating that they always say in the media, ‘But, of course, he can’t win.’” She went on, “I just tell them, ‘They have said he can’t do this until we prove we can. They’re gonna say he can’t until we can. And that’s what’s always happened with Bernie.’” She mentioned a Quinnipiac University poll showing that, in a general-election contest against Donald Trump, Sanders would win by eight



*“It’s a balloon reminder that all joy is fleeting.”*

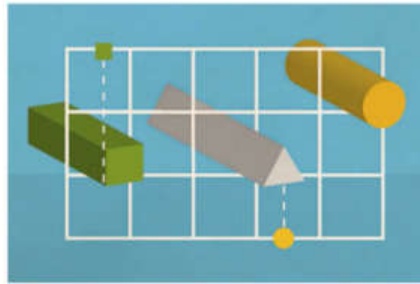
percentage points. (The same poll indicated that Vice-President Joe Biden, who is considering entering the race, would win by twelve points.) “Bernie can defeat Republicans—he’s done it here,” Jane said. “And he’s had them join him on certain things. He’s a democratic socialist, but he’ll work with Republicans to get things done.”

When Sanders first ran for the House of Representatives, in 1988, he lost to a Republican named Peter Smith, the scion of a banking family. During Smith’s first term, he co-sponsored an assault-rifle ban. In 1990, Sanders ran again, and the N.R.A. went after Smith, sending letters to its Vermont members describing Sanders as the lesser of two evils, since he wasn’t publicly supporting the ban. Sanders won. This is the origin of the critique that Sanders has weak gun-control credentials for a progressive. Vermont is a gun-friendly state: twenty-eight per cent of its residents own firearms, according to a recent survey, and it has some of the nation’s most permissive gun laws.

In national office, Sanders has not been a vocal proponent of strict gun control. In 1993, he voted against the Brady Bill, objecting to its imposition of a five-day waiting period to buy a handgun. And in 2009 he voted to allow guns in national parks and on Amtrak trains. Over the years, he has also voted for some restrictions, including a semi-automatic-assault-weapons ban and instant criminal-background checks. The N.R.A. has given him grades ranging from C- to F. (It’s a tough grader.) But he has never been out front on the issue, partly because it doesn’t seem to engage him deeply, and partly because he wants to retain the loyalty of voters in northeast Vermont, where hunting is popular. Sanders tends to present guns as an urban problem that Vermonters can afford not to worry about, though mass shootings can happen anywhere and suicides by gun are as much a problem in Vermont as they are in other states. He told me, “I’m proud of my state, and I think I’m in a good position to try to bridge the gap between urban America—where guns mean one thing, where guns mean guns in the hands of kids who are shooting each other or shooting at police officers—and rural America, where

significant majorities of people are gun owners, and ninety-nine per cent of them are lawful.”

Sanders’s congressional career did not get off to a promising start. As an Independent, he had a hard time landing committee assignments. Garrison Nelson recalls, “Bernie shows up in Washington in 1991, there’s still a chunk of Southerners in the Democratic caucus, and they do not want



Bernie in the caucus.” Sanders didn’t help matters by giving more than one interview denouncing Congress. “This place is not working,” he told the Associated Press. “It is failing. Change is not going to take place until many hundreds of these people are thrown out of their offices.” He went on, “Congress does not have the courage to stand up to the powerful interests. I have the freedom to speak my mind.”

Some of his colleagues returned the favor. Joe Moakley, a Massachusetts Democrat who was the chairman of the influential House Rules Committee, told the A.P. reporter, “He screams and hollers, but he is all alone.” Another Democrat from the Massachusetts delegation, Barney Frank, was even more blunt. “Bernie alienates his natural allies,” he said. “His holier-than-thou attitude—saying, in a very loud voice, he is smarter than everyone else and purer than everyone else—really undercuts his effectiveness.”

Nelson told me that, when he ran into Sanders in Burlington, he warned him not to keep “pissing in the soup,” adding, “You’re our only representative!” According to Nelson, Sanders said, “Gary, you have no idea how totally corrupt it is.” Nelson responded, “Bernie, I’m a historian of Congress. Give me a year, I’ll give you a scandal.”

In time, Sanders became slightly more discriminating in his criticism, and made some allies. He was one of

the founding members and the first chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which has grown steadily over the years, from six members in 1991 to seventy-one today. The C.P.C. produces an annual progressive budget as an alternative to the one that actually passes; it tends to operate mainly as a conscience of the left. He worked hard with Democrats to keep jobs in his state and campaigned to strengthen federal regulation of milk prices, because it helped Vermont dairy farmers. (He once wrote that he’d developed “an almost emotional attachment” to these farmers, despite not knowing “one end of a cow from the other” when he arrived in the state.) In national matters such as curbing the excesses of the Patriot Act, Sanders found that he could at least try to make incremental changes through the amendment process; in 2005, a *Rolling Stone* profile dubbed him “the amendment king.”

At home, Sanders became a symbol of Vermont’s cursed uniqueness, as affectionately regarded as a scoop of Chunky Monkey. He was reelected to the House seven times. And his ascent to the Senate, in 2006, was stunning: he trounced the Republican candidate, Richard Tarrant, one of the wealthiest men in the state, by thirty-three percentage points. But when Sanders has run for the Vermont governorship he hasn’t done well. Jim Condon, the state legislator and former reporter, notes, “That’s telling. People here like him making a lot of noise in Washington for a little state—they’re happy to send a human hand grenade down there.” But they don’t necessarily want Sanders running the state.

Since joining the Senate, Sanders has received the most attention for his gestures of defiance—such as his marathon oration against tax cuts for the wealthiest, which was published in book form as “The Speech: A Historic Filibuster on Corporate Greed and the Decline of Our Middle Class.” Still, he has been a very active legislator. An analysis by the nonpartisan Web site GovTrack shows him tied for sixth place among senators who introduced the most bills in the 2013-14 session of Congress, and in tenth place for the number of bills that made it out of committee. The site also noted that he



tends to gather co-sponsors for his bills only among Democrats.

Yet Sanders has proved himself capable of bipartisan dealmaking. In the 2013-14 session, he was the chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, and though he did not serve in the military—and typically opposes military interventions—he has been a strong advocate for veterans. Last year, he worked with an unlikely ally, the Arizona Republican John McCain, to hammer out a compromise to reform the ailing V.A. health system. The bill provided five billion dollars in additional funding to hire and train new medical staff, made it easier to dismiss V.A. officials for incompetence, and allowed veterans to go outside the system if the wait for a doctor was too long. Sanders explained to reporters that it was far from the bill he would have devised on his own: "It opens up a fear of privatization, which I strongly, strongly am opposed to." But he sounded pleased with his ball-passing skills: "When you become chairman, you can't just say, 'This is the way I want it.'"

McCain, in turn, expressed respect for his unlikely partner, telling the Huffington Post, "Negotiating with Bernie was not a usual experience, because he is very passionate and he and I are both very strong-willed people, and we spend a lot of time banging our fists on the table and having the occasional four-letter word. But at the end of the day Bernie was result-oriented."

Sanders is proud of a few other Senate deals. He successfully made an amendment to the Affordable Care Act which allotted eleven billion dollars for community-health centers to provide primary care regardless of patients' ability to pay. And, he said, he had done "everything I could do to stop the Republicans—and, sadly, the President and a few Democrats—from cutting Social Security, through the chained C.P.I." The chained C.P.I., a different way of calculating the annual cost-of-living increases in Social Security, would likely have lowered the increases for most people, and Obama proposed adopting it in his 2014 budget. Sanders helped lead the opposition, and the President recently stopped pushing for the proposal. "It was a tough fight," Sanders said. "But now, as a result of a

lot of grassroots activism, the debate is about expanding Social Security rather than about cutting it."

Could Bernie Sanders win the Democratic nomination, let alone the Presidency? It is unlikely, for one of the reasons that he's running for President: money dominates the electoral system. By October 1st, Clinton had raised more than a hundred million dollars, much of it from Super PACs and big donors. Sanders, who refuses to take money from Super PACs, had raised forty-one million dollars, mostly in donations of less than two hundred dollars each. These totals leave him at a major disadvantage. Still, his haul is impressive, and in the most recent fund-raising cycle donations to his campaign were neck and neck with Clinton's: between July and October, he raised twenty-six million dollars to her twenty-eight million.

It's impressive, too, that in a recent YouGov/CBS News poll Sanders is leading Clinton by twenty-two percentage points in New Hampshire and ten in Iowa. But the picture in South Carolina is quite different: there Clinton is twenty-three points ahead. That comparison highlights a key distinction between white and nonwhite Democrats. The New Hampshire and Iowa Democratic samples included too few nonwhite voters to break out. But among black Democrats in South Carolina Clinton leads, at fifty-two per cent; Sanders is at four per cent. Nationally, the comparable figures are fifty-seven per cent to ten per cent. And though Sanders quickly modified his platform to accommodate Black Lives Matter activists, he still has a long way to go to win over African-American voters. Latino voters are similarly unfamiliar with him: a Gallup poll released in late August showed that only twenty-five per cent knew of him, and those who did were almost evenly divided between favorable and unfavorable impressions. A Washington Post/ABC News poll released in September shows that, if Biden were in the race, he would attract more nonwhite voters than Sanders (though substantially fewer than Clinton).

Nor is Sanders's trajectory likely to mirror that of Obama in 2008. Sanders supporters like to point out that,

in the summer of 2007, Obama was polling behind Hillary Clinton among black Democrats. But, as Michael Tesler, a political scientist at the University of California, Irvine, recently noted in the *Washington Post*, Obama enjoyed much higher favorability ratings among black Democrats than Sanders does now.

Sanders's commitment to recapturing some of the white working-class males that the Democratic Party lost in the Reagan years won't necessarily help his candidacy; indeed, it could hurt his quest to connect with minority voters. As he's found, emphasizing class over race can get a progressive in trouble. Although he's committed to immigration reform and creating a path to citizenship, he sees an ulterior motive in some approaches to the former. "There is a reason why Wall Street and all of corporate America likes immigration reform," he said at an event held by the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in July. "It is not, in my view, that they are staying up nights worrying about undocumented workers in this country. What I think they are interested in is seeing a process by which we can bring low-wage labor of all levels into this country, to depress wages in America."

Angelica Salas, an immigration-rights organizer in Los Angeles, whose group was represented onstage at a Sanders rally there in August, told me that she finds the immigration platform of one of his rivals—Martin O'Malley, the former governor of Maryland—to be more "detailed, robust, and impressive." Latino voters, she said, had been disappointed in Obama's immigration policy and were looking for candidates who were committed to reform: "For a long time, it was almost like having an affair with the Democratic Party—they say they love you, but they don't want to be seen with you in public."

Yet Sanders is doing well enough to concern the Clinton team, and that creates its own challenges. Garrison Nelson said of Clinton, "She's not worried about Bernie. But she is worried about the Bernie effect—which is to demonstrate her relative weaknesses as a candidate. He hits at her Achilles' heel, which is authenticity."

On the trail, Clinton has avoided mention of him; Sanders, for his part,

emphasizes their policy differences. He voted against the war in Iraq; she voted for it. He has opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership; she has voiced support for those pacts. But he has rebuked reporters for pressing him to say more about Clinton herself. In a video made backstage at a rally in Iowa, he complained, "Time after time, I'm being asked to criticize Hillary Clinton. That's the sport that you guys like. . . . I've known Hillary Clinton for twenty-five years. I like her. I respect her. I disagree with her on a number of issues. No great secret."

Sanders appears to be sticking with that approach. But the Clinton campaign may be testing out a more aggressive strategy. Correct the Record, a Super PAC backing Clinton, recently sent an e-mail to the Huffington Post suggesting that Sanders shared many views with the controversial new British Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, then noting that Corbyn had called the death of Osama bin Laden a tragedy. Correct the Record has also sent trackers—operatives who tape rival candidates, looking for gaffes—to Sanders events.

Sanders has promised not to run for President as an Independent in the general election, saying that he doesn't want to have any role in handing victory to a Republican. But, even if he fails to secure the Democratic nomination, he has exposed a deep indignation about the distribution of wealth which other candidates cannot ignore. Sanders often says that he is not that far outside the mainstream—that a majority of Americans agree with him on many of his tenets. According to a recent CBS News/New York Times poll, sixty-six per cent of Americans feel that "money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed"; seventy-one per cent favor raising the minimum wage, at least slightly; and seventy-four per cent believe that corporations exert too much influence on American politics and life. Other recent surveys show that strong majorities oppose any cuts in Social Security and support workers' rights to unionize. A Gallup poll in May concluded that nearly half of Americans are "strong redistributionists, in the sense that they believe the



*"Row faster, Manny—I just spotted my ex."*

distribution of wealth and income is not fair, and endorse heavy taxes on the rich as a way of redistributing wealth."

It's hard to see, though, how these sentiments could be translated into policy in the U.S. Many, if not most, voters would likely resist paying more taxes to make such sweeping reforms possible. The American electorate seems to respond simultaneously to calls for redistributive justice and the rejection of the entity most likely to accomplish it: the federal government. And many voters might feel that matters of economic fairness are trumped by such social issues as abortion and guns.

In mid-September, Sanders spoke before the weekly convocation attended by the student body at Liberty University, the evangelical school in Lynchburg, Virginia, founded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Unlike many liberal élites, Sanders does not seem to prefer talking to people who share his views; because he is not an especially convivial person, he does not require conviviality from others. Sanders relishes the opportunity to enter enemy territory, where he believes that he can find secret allies.

At Liberty, he began by acknowledging that his positions on women's reproductive rights and gay marriage are

strongly at odds with the views of many evangelical Christians. He did not make knowing jokes about these differences: as usual, Sanders was dead serious. The students were poker-faced but polite. He sought common ground by adding new valences to one or two of his standard arguments. When he called for federally mandated, paid family leave to bring America in line with the rest of the world, he dwelled a little on the preciousness of the bond between mother and baby. He was rewarded with applause. But the occasion also played to the prophetic side of Sanders—the register in which he can sound like an Old Testament preacher. Unlike his slicker rivals, Sanders is most at ease talking about the moral and ethical dimensions of politics. "We are living in a nation and in a world—the Bible speaks to this issue—in a nation and in a world which worships not love of brothers and sisters, not love of the poor and the sick, but worships the acquisition of money and great wealth." His voice broke—all those stump speeches had been leaving deep scratches on the record. But his outrage was unmuffled. Staring at the crowd, he quoted the Hebrew Bible, his fist punctuating nearly every word: "Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream." ♦



# THE NETWORK MAN

*Reid Hoffman's big idea.*

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

Early on a Monday evening in June, Reid Hoffman, the founder and executive chairman of the business-oriented networking site LinkedIn, met Mark Pincus, the founder and chief executive of the gaming site Zynga, for dinner at a casual restaurant in Portola Valley, California, a wealthy residential town at the western edge of Silicon Valley. Breakfasts and dinners are a big part of Hoffman's life. He recently published two books on how to be successful in business, and is finishing a third, whose working title is "Blitzscaling." His business is based on the idea of managing your career through relentless networking, which is something he enjoys.

If someone told you that Hoffman was the equipment manager for a Pearl Jam tour, it wouldn't seem like a casting error. He is a big, broad-faced man with tousled brown hair, who typically dresses for work in black shorts, a black T-shirt, running shoes, and white socks. He befriended Pincus about twenty years ago, when the two met in the Bay Area to discuss business ideas, and discovered that they both believed that social media would be the next big thing in Silicon Valley. At dinner, Hoffman was wearing two watches, one on each wrist—an Apple Watch and a competing product—so he could see which one he liked better. He hustled in a few minutes late, sat down, and pulled out a small notebook filled with an indecipherable scrawl.

"Joss Whedon," Hoffman said, referring to the film and television director who specializes in material about vampires and comic-book characters. "Is he somebody you think is cool and fun? No? I'm interviewing him on Wednesday."

"I have a recruiting dinner," Pincus said. "Actually a re-recruiting dinner." He

is a forty-nine-year-old triathlete, small and lithe, with a long flop of hair. He was wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers.

Hoffman shrugged. "Anything top of mind? 'Cause I have a list." Hoffman tries to begin all meals with a ritual in which both parties write down a list of the topics they want to discuss.

"I made a connection between the things we were talking about with the President and the Summer of Love," Pincus said.

During President Obama's reelection campaign, in 2012, Hoffman and Pincus each gave a million dollars to Priorities USA, the Democratic Super PAC. Since then, they have had the opportunity to spend time with Obama. In a private forty-five-minute meeting in the Oval Office in 2012, Pincus gave the President a PowerPoint presentation on what he calls "the product-management approach to government." Obama telephones him now and then, sometimes at home, and Pincus and his wife have been Obama's dinner guests.

In June, Hoffman helped organize the guest list for a dinner party for Obama in San Francisco, and he has had conversations with Obama at several meetings and dinners at the White House. One was for a small group that included Toni Morrison and the actress Eva Longoria, convened to give Obama advice about his post-Presidency. Hoffman and his wife, Michelle Yee, also attended the state dinner in late September for Xi Jinping, the President of China.

LinkedIn has provided the White House with some of the trove of data it has collected about its users' activities in the job market; the data have been used in the annual Economic Report of the President. Earlier this year, a former LinkedIn executive, DJ Patil, was named to the new position of chief data scien-

tist in the White House. In July, Hoffman organized a meeting for people involved with Obama's new foundation on how to better harness the power of social networks. His list for dinner with Pincus included the question of what to discuss at that meeting.

The close relationship between Hoffman and the White House isn't just about his being a major political donor. He and others like him have something more powerful than money to offer: a way for officials to connect with the largest possible audiences. In the nineteenth century, the bosses of political machines served this role; in the twentieth, it was media barons, especially in broadcasting and newspapers; in the twenty-first, it is people who have created vast online social networks.

This year's Super Bowl attracted the biggest audience in the history of American network television—a hundred and fourteen million people. That represents an annual peak in the life of a declining medium. The three traditional evening broadcast news programs together draw twenty-two million viewers. Every day, a hundred and sixty-four million people in the U.S. and Canada, and up to a billion people worldwide, are active on Facebook.

Obama has said that he wants to encourage civic engagement after he leaves the White House. Silicon Valley can provide powerful tools to accomplish that. The same calculus draws people from Hollywood, such as Joss Whedon, on regular pilgrimages north to meet with Hoffman and others. And it's why, when the launch of the Health-Care.gov Web site failed spectacularly in the fall of 2013, the White House's chief technology officer (a friend of Hoffman's) hired a team of Silicon Valley executives to help fix it.

In politics as in the rest of life,



*Hoffman, who founded LinkedIn, has a premise about how the economic world will work from now on.*



relationships move in two directions. Along with whatever help Obama gets in Silicon Valley, he will absorb some of its view of the world. In that view, humanity is a kind of Prometheus bound by a constricting web of old institutional arrangements that the Internet must clear away. Reid Hoffman and his friends have got very skillful at politics, nationally and globally, and their ideas have a good chance of being implemented.

**W**hy don't we start with the Summer of Love?" Hoffman said.

Pincus shook his head. "No, let's start with your list."

Hoffman ticked off a few items: An upper-level undergraduate computer-science class he's teaching at Stanford called "Technology-Enabled Blitzscaling." Twitch, an online video platform for gamers. His recent meetings with George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom; Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Duke of York; and the minister of cabinet affairs of the United Arab Emirates. How Hoffman and Pincus manage their wealth. (Hoffman is worth between three and four billion dollars, which puts him between twentieth and thirtieth place on the list of Silicon Valley's richest people.)

"Oh, and one more," he said. "Are you stacking A.I. at all?"

"I got that book 'Superintelligence,'" Pincus said.

"I've actually decided it's worth going deep on," Hoffman said.

They finished the items on Hoffman's list. "So let's go to the President," Hoffman said. "Start with my view or your view?"

"He's coming back to his strength, being an orator to the people," Pincus said. "When I had my one-on-one with him, I said, 'Where's Preacher Obama? And Obama the fighter? Scrappy with Congress, in the fray.' When he's Preacher Obama, he goes back to that J.F.K. place. My favorite moment was at the end, when he said, 'Unless we solve governance, you're not going to have the impact you want to have.'"

They talked for a while about ways the political system might be fixed through online activism. Last year, Hoffman contributed a million dollars to Mayday, the crowdfunded Super PAC founded by Lawrence Lessig, the Harvard law professor who is now running for President. Mayday is designed to end all Super PACs, removing big money from politics.

Pincus had one idea he was especially excited about. "In this election, we'd want a million people to raise one

billion dollars to run Mike Bloomberg for President," he said. Pincus and Hoffman know and admire Bloomberg. "Through Kickstarter. Say the minimum is five hundred million. I think he'd be the best. It'd be pretty cool. That would change politics forever."

He tightened his body into a coil and leaned toward Hoffman. "Why couldn't that happen? A million people, buying the Presidency. Look at Star Citizen," he said, referring to an upcoming online multiplayer simulation game about the governance of the United Empire of Earth in the thirtieth century. Through crowdfunding appeals, Star Citizen has brought in some eighty million dollars to finance further game development.

"It's a game that runs for two years, they have a hundred million users a year, two to three hundred thousand a day. People are passionate about the game, and the guy who does it"—Chris Roberts—"is a star. If you can do that, why can't people buy the Presidency?" He meant modest voluntary contributors, not big-money donors like Hoffman and him. "A million people give a thousand dollars apiece. I believe there's a million people who'd like to give a 'fuck you' to both political parties."

Hoffman often finds himself providing a reality check to his wild-eyed friends. "I think Bloomberg had his people look at it," he said, meaning that Bloomberg had thought about running and decided not to. But Pincus wasn't convinced.

"He's not seventy-per-cent sure he'd win," Pincus said. "If he thought he'd win, he'd run. If he knew this would work, he'd do it. The media attention would be so massive! I think he's, like, shy. Maybe a little risk-averse. He's the opposite of Trump."

"To some extent, that's what happened with Obama," Hoffman said. Thinking about how suddenly the Obama campaign had taken off in 2007 and 2008, he was warming up to the idea.

"I start with 'What's a fun story?'" Pincus said. "And fun stories wind up with money. Wouldn't it be cool? And wouldn't it change politics forever?"

Hoffman's dinners gain altitude and velocity as they go on. It's not about the food and drink. He is on a perpetual



*"This jousting—I hope you're not doing it on my account."*

diet and seems barely to notice what is put before him. The conversation provides the stimulus: the grander the ideas, the more voluble he becomes.

It was time to get to Pincus's list. "Summer of Love," Hoffman said.

"Summer of Love. Should I remind you of the concept? The idea is that, in 2017, it's the fiftieth anniversary of the original Summer of Love in San Francisco. Can we use that to generate a year-long summer of service?" Pincus explained that a series of rock concerts might be organized, offering tickets competitively through a new app. "Start in San Francisco. It could be gamified civic engagement. It's a different narrative for tech. It's not the narrative that's been written for us. It's disruption on an establishment level, not a tech level. I spoke to Bono about it, and he went nuts!"

"I'll give it more thought," Hoffman said.

"It'd be interesting to see what Obama thinks about it."

"For sure. We'll add that to the July meeting."

Everything about Reid Hoffman—his business, his political activities, his philanthropy, and his social life—is based on a premise about how the economic world will work from now on. In the decades immediately after the Second World War, people thought about the economy in terms of corporations, government agencies, labor unions, and so on; middle-class Americans often aspired to a life spent at a big organization that offered job security, health care, and a pension. Beginning in the mid-nineteen-seventies, this social order fell apart, as economic life became much more uncertain and more favorable to Wall Street than to Main Street. The idea that companies should be run primarily to keep their stock price as high as possible came to the fore, the goal of lifetime employment faded, and bright people who wanted business careers were more attracted to finance than to industry. It was at this time that the growth of middle-class incomes began to slow, and inequality began to increase.

Hoffman is convinced that we can fix the problem through Internet-enabled networks. Work is already be-

coming more temporary, sporadic, and informal, and this change should be embraced. Many more people will become entrepreneurial, if not entrepreneurs. The keeper of your career will be not your employer but your personal network—so you'd better put a lot of effort into making it as extensive and as vital as possible. A twenty-first-century version of William H. Whyte's memorably titled 1956 book "The Organization Man" would, by Hoffman's logic, be called "The Network Man," and this virtual structure would define the age as fully as the big corporation defined the earlier age.

LinkedIn, which has more than three hundred and eighty million members, is meant to be the enabling device for the emerging era. Although outsiders tend to see the company as an inexhaustible source of nuisance e-mails, its members constantly bulk up their personal networks and post new material to their profiles, to be ready for the next job switch. Still, Silicon Valley is obsessed with "scale," and LinkedIn is, as yet, insufficiently enormous.

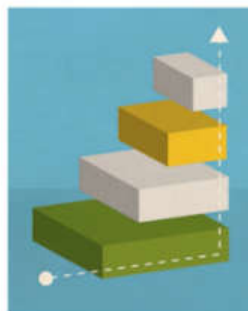
Last year, Jeff Weiner, Hoffman's successor as C.E.O., announced a plan to have LinkedIn create something he calls "the economic graph," which would track all employment activity in the world, for the 3.3 billion people who work, with LinkedIn as the platform.

"The vision is to create economic opportunity for everyone on the globe," Weiner, a small, peppy, bearded man of forty-five, told me when I visited him in his office. "We've built the infrastructure. It's not fantasy." LinkedIn would be a purveyor of education, in the form of online skill-building courses; Hoffman recently published an essay called "Disrupting the Diploma," in which he argued that, in the future, people won't think of higher education only as getting degrees from universities. (In April, LinkedIn acquired Lynda.com, the online education company.)

LinkedIn would also purvey business advice. Three years ago, it assembled a group of eight hundred "influencers"—Hoffman, Bill Gates, Deepak Chopra, Arianna Huffington—who

began regularly posting on the LinkedIn site. (Counting the work of less rarefied figures, LinkedIn posts at least five hundred thousand new pieces of writing a month.) It would list every job everywhere and provide a profile for every member of the global workforce, including blue-collar workers. Every time you changed jobs or needed to acquire a new skill, you would use LinkedIn.

The wall of Hoffman's office, along with photographs of him with Michael Bloomberg, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama, contains a framed "network graph," produced by the company's data-analytics team, showing all the connections he makes to other people through LinkedIn.



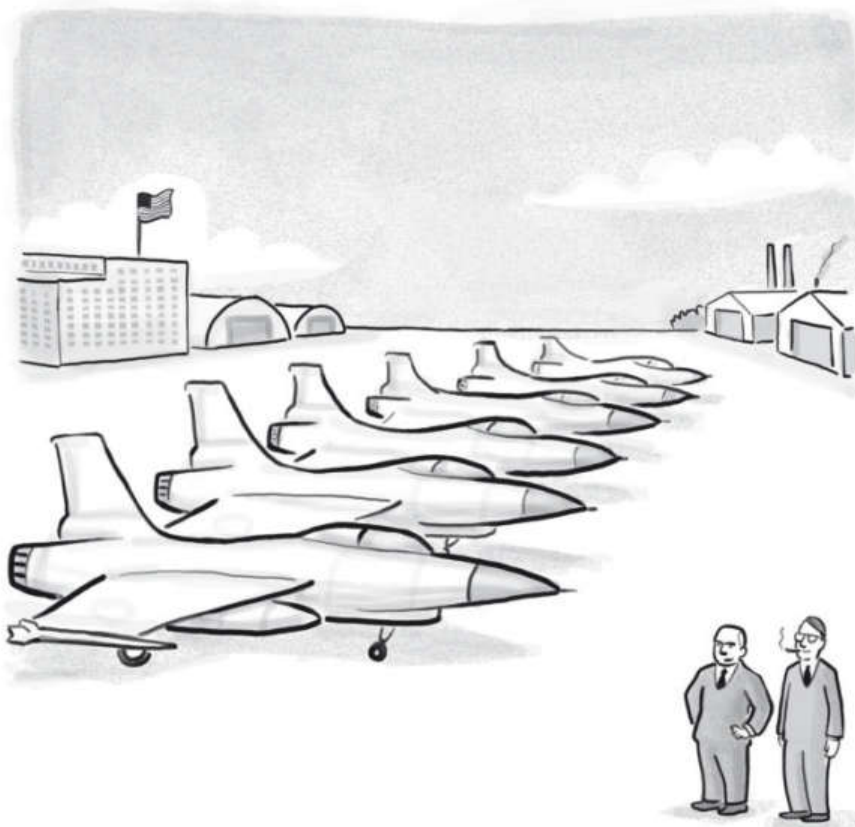
It's a diagram of thousands of color-coded lines linking nodes on the network, with Hoffman at the center—by far the most densely connected node.

Hoffman has an uncanny ability to move seamlessly among the worlds of technology, investing, and politics and the worlds of games, science fiction, and comics. "Business is the systematic playing of games," he says. He seems to conceive of himself as a self-invented superhero: the Ubernode, the world's most networked person. He isn't just another conventional networker or another greedy Silicon Valley prick. His project is to build a better world, whose outlines are much clearer to him than to most people.

Although he has become one of the informal rulers of the place he inhabits, the Ubernode is determined to be a kind of reverse exemplar of its culture. He and his wife live in a four-bedroom house in Palo Alto; he doesn't own a private plane (though he sometimes rents one) or a vast rural estate; and his only obvious luxury, a Tesla, is a recent acquisition. He devotes much of his time to conducting Godfather-like meetings with friends, employees, tech aspirants, visiting dignitaries, and do-gooders who want advice or a favor. At some point, he will gently ask, "How can I be helpful?" All his activities are in the service of the same cause: to make it possible for more people to operate the way he does.

Hoffman likes to ask people, "Who's





*"The enemies of America will know that we mean business when we sell them a fleet of these sweet babies."*

in your tribe?" His tribe is entrepreneurs. Nancy Lublin, a "social entrepreneur" in New York (DoSomething.org, Crisis Text Line), says, "Reid introduced me to a different world, where for the first time I felt normal. This thing chose me. This thing chose Reid. I think our religion is entrepreneurship." Hoffman calls himself "a mystical atheist," but he says that he is "deeply engaged in religious questions." The world he has created around himself has elaborate customs and rituals, and it has something to say about every part of life and every major issue. Not long ago, Hoffman worked with a branding company to devise a system of twenty-eight images—they look like the petroglyphs at ancient Native American sites in the West—one for each essential human virtue and one for Hoffman's

initials. Hoffman shares the meaning of the images with members of his tribe.

Hoffman was born during the Summer of Love, at Stanford Hospital, in Palo Alto, when his father was attending law school at the university. Bill Hoffman is the grandson of a Los Angeles newspaperman who wrote a series of pulp Westerns with titles like "Gun Gospel" and "Law of the Lash." Hoffman's mother, Deanna Ruth Rutter, grew up in Silicon Valley and also became a lawyer. The couple met as students at Foothill College, when he nominated her for a school beauty pageant. They married and promptly separated, leaving Hoffman the only child of estranged parents who were still in their early twenties.

Rutter brought him up for a few years in California and, briefly, in Alaska, where she had taken a job. Then, because "Mom was going through some hard times," she and Hoffman moved in with her parents, back in Sunnyvale. He ended up with his father, who had remarried and was living in Mill Valley. When that marriage ended, he moved to Berkeley with his father, who had entered another relationship. "To have your parents get divorced at a young age, there's a lot of turbulence," Hoffman says. "We all grew up together, in some way. It was not idyllic. It was intense, vibrant, sometimes oppressive. I felt I was very much in a world of my own. I didn't meld much in school. I was kind of a loner."

Hoffman thinks of his parents as having been sixties radicals. He has been told by relatives that he was teargassed as a child at demonstrations. His father worked for the federal War on Poverty in its dying days, and with the Black Panthers and other radical clients, though he wound up as a conventional business lawyer. At the age of twelve, Hoffman went to his first Grateful Dead concert with his father. Last summer, he took Bill Hoffman backstage to meet Mickey Hart at a reunion concert of the surviving Dead members.

A common origin story for tech tycoons entails a transforming youthful encounter with personal computers or the Internet. For Steve Jobs, it took place at the Homebrew Computer Club, in Menlo Park. For Hoffman, it was fantasy role-playing board games, especially Dungeons & Dragons, which he took up when he was nine. One day at Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School, in Berkeley, a classmate told him that a game company called Chaosium had an office in Emeryville, a neighboring city, and that it occasionally invited groups of boys to come in and test its products.

Hoffman got himself into one of the groups, and then returned to Chaosium, offering to correct errors he had found in a set of role-playing scripts for Dungeons & Dragons that the company had published. He wrote a detailed memo and took it to Steve Perrin, a major game developer (All the World's Monsters, RuneQuest, Elfquest) who was working at Chaosium at the time.

"He looked at it and said, 'This is good feedback,'" Hoffman says. "So they gave me another scenario pack to review." He also began writing reviews for *Different Worlds*, a gaming magazine that Chaosium published, and getting modestly paid for his work.

Hoffman persuaded his father to send him first to a private school in Berkeley, and then to the Putney School, a progressive boarding school in Vermont, which another classmate was planning to attend. He applied without telling his parents. "Vermont was the farthest place from California I could imagine that still seemed feasible," he said. Once he got there, his relationship with his friend from Berkeley turned sour and another student started a bullying campaign against him. He compared it to the organized cruelty in "Lord of the Flies," saying, "Little harassments, the techniques of trying to demonstrate power and dominance—that was my first experience of betrayal." Hoffman used game logic to solve the problem: "The way you deal with bullies is you change their economic equation. Make it more expensive for them to hassle you." He went to the chief bully, and said that if he continued to hassle him, "I will break everything you own." He stopped."

The miseries of Hoffman's early life ended when he got to Stanford, in 1989. He enrolled in a new major called Symbolic Systems, a combination of philosophy, linguistics, psychology, and computer science. He met Michelle Yee in his freshman year. He also became close to Peter Thiel, the Silicon Valley provocateur who specializes in starting companies and making impolitic public statements. He has come to embody the libertarianism that permeates much of Silicon Valley. They both won seats on Stanford's student senate, with Hoffman as the left-winger and Thiel as the right-winger.

Hoffman decided to become a philosopher or a public intellectual, a term he likes to use. But after studying for three years at Oxford, on a Marshall scholarship, he decided against an academic career. His professors spent their time thinking about highly specific problems and publishing for an audience of

their peers. Hoffman's ambitions were almost diametrically opposed to that kind of thinking.

In the early nineties, when Hoffman returned from Oxford, he and Thiel spent a weekend at Hoffman's grandparents' house, in Mendocino County, talking about what they were going to do with their lives. Thiel told me that Hoffman was entranced by "Snow Crash," a science-fiction novel by Neal Stephenson, published in 1992, which takes place in a twenty-first-century California where government has collapsed and people create avatars and try to find a new way to live through a technology-based virtual society called the Metaverse.

The term "Internet" was not yet in general circulation, and "social network" was an academic concept that psychologists and sociologists used to derive mathematical formulas that explained people's patterns of friendships. But Hoffman was playing with a set of ingredients that he had first explored at Stanford, with Thiel and others—fantasy gaming, computer technology, philosophy—and thinking about whether there was a big idea that could enable

him to have a major effect on the world, first through a business and then through the creation of an entire social system.

His first job was at a short-lived online service at Apple called eWorld. Then he worked at WorldsAway, a "virtual chat" community, owned by Fujitsu, where users interacted through fictionalized graphic representations of themselves. In 1997, Hoffman started his own company, called SocialNet, which created a way for people to connect with each other for various purposes, mainly dating, using pseudonyms.

SocialNet was soon acquired for a modest sum by a company called Spark Networks, which now owns the religious dating sites JDate and ChristianMingle. Hoffman and his friends had failed to realize that the most successful online networks would get people to use their real names. But in starting online software businesses based on the idea of connecting people, they had arrived at a key perception about the Internet.

Most traditional companies thought of the new medium as a potentially miraculous, and cheap, way to broadcast their products to much larger audiences. People like Hoffman, Pincus, and Thiel





saw it as a way to, as Hoffman puts it, “configure the space in which people would interact” on their own: the analogy was more to the telephone than to television or radio. The members of the network would decide what information it carried, and communication would run between members, not from the center to the members. This was the theory; along with it went a super-aggressive mode of business behavior. The robber barons of the late nineteenth century often associated their drive to power with religious piety or with Darwin’s theory of natural selection. The equivalent for Internet entrepreneurs is a rhetoric of fighting established interests on behalf of ordinary people. Pincus coined the phrase “revolution of the ants” to describe what he and his friends believed they were fomenting.

Sarnoff’s law, a twentieth-century broadcasting maxim named after the founder of NBC, holds that the value of a network rises and falls in lockstep with audience size. Silicon Valley’s version is Metcalfe’s law, named after one of the inventors of Ethernet, a pivotal technology for computer-to-computer contact. The law says that the value of a network grows exponentially with the number of its users. (Hoffman prefers the word “superlinear” to indicate that some people in a network are much more connected than others.) His generation’s theory of the Internet means that you can get much bigger, much faster, without creating a conventional product at all.

Hoffman and Yee, who got married in 2004, have decided not to have children. “Our position is a reasoned position,” he says. “We both think children are delightful. For me, the projects I’m doing at major scale in the world—the project is the major driver. For her, she’s pretty focussed on the spiritual nature of life. It doesn’t have to be her own biology. As long as she can help people grow.” Yee is a clinical speech pathologist who has stopped seeing patients and is now, Hoffman says, trying to find a large philanthropic project to which she can devote herself. She rarely participates in his business and political dinners, and, to get away from the all-consuming Silicon Valley culture, she spends time on Buddhist retreats. She would like to do some-

thing to help people of the Navajo Nation, one of the most poverty-stricken of the major Native American tribes.

Once, I asked Hoffman whether he thought that having grown up without siblings or a conventional family, without roots in a neighborhood, had made especially intense his connections to friends, professional contacts, people he met online, society as a whole. He shrugged amiably and said that the thought had never occurred to him. “Is that the psychological origin story for my focus on networks?” he said. “Maybe.”

Hoffman spends every Monday at Greylock, the Silicon Valley venture-capital firm, where he is one of a small group of partners. Greylock’s headquarters are on Sand Hill Road, the Via Imperii of technology investing, close to the Stanford campus. LinkedIn, where Hoffman occupies another office for much of the week, has a six-building campus in the industrial flats of Mountain View, a few miles to the east, right next to Google’s.

His two jobs, his relentless round of breakfasts and dinners, his regular forays into the hipper north branch of Silicon Valley in San Francisco, and a great deal of travel put him at the nexus of the technology culture. As he once remarked to a visitor, “More or less, if there’s anything in the Valley I’m going to know about it.” One day when I was at Greylock, Bill Gates dropped by for a few hours to hear about the company’s portfolio. Greylock was an early investor in Facebook, and Mark Zuckerberg now invests part of his fortune with Greylock.

When Hoffman is not in Silicon Valley, he’s often at gatherings like the annual TED conference in Vancouver; the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland (though Hoffman says he’s likely to eliminate that one because it takes too long to get there); the two annual Allen & Co. gatherings, one in Sun Valley and one in Tucson; Bilderberg, the venerable international-relations conference in Europe; a relatively new annual get-together in Montana hosted by Eric Schmidt, of Google, which includes such guests from outside Silicon Valley as, last year, Lady Gaga and Jeff Koons; Dialog, in Utah, which Peter Thiel hosts every

other year with the entrepreneur Auren Hoffman (no relation to Reid); and an occasional series called Foo, which stands for Friends of O’Reilly, staged by Tim O’Reilly, a technology guru known as the coiner of the term Web 2.0. O’Reilly is planning an event this fall called WTF, which stands for What’s the Future?

The closest thing Hoffman has to an extended-family vacation is The Weekend to Be Named Later, a highly scripted annual conference held between Christmas and New Year’s at a Southern California resort. Ten years ago, Hoffman and Nancy Lublin, the social entrepreneur in New York, founded the conference, because they felt that Renaissance Weekend, the year-end networking conference in Hilton Head (whose most famous guests, in the nineteen-eighties, were the rising Clintons), didn’t speak to their generation. Hoffman and Lublin invite a hundred and fifty or so people roughly in their forties, along with their families—Yee goes on occasion. Days are devoted to panel discussions of life’s big issues, and evenings to games.

The master construct in Hoffman’s world is allocating capital to other entrepreneurs—a category that includes politicians (Senator Cory Booker, of New Jersey, is a favorite), people starting businesses, and founders of non-profit organizations whom Hoffman considers to be members of his tribe. He told me that in Silicon Valley prestige is not especially important, which means that there is an assumed equivalence between numerically measurable performance and social value.

Technology investing, especially at this moment, represents a highly specialized form of hypercapitalism. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, businesses needed investment capital in order to build factories and stores and to acquire equipment and inventory. Only then could they begin to make money. Internet startups don’t require much in the way of physical assets beyond office space, and they can have global reach instantaneously.

It’s theoretically possible to make almost unimaginable amounts of money very quickly, on relatively small investments. Last year, Facebook bought



*Victoria Robert*

*"What's the point of being filled with gifts if they can only be beaten out of you?"*

• •

WhatsApp for nineteen billion dollars, when it was less than five years old, with fifty-five employees and minimal revenues. The acquisition brought WhatsApp's original venture funder a sixty-to-one return on its investment. Greylock was an early investor in Instagram, which sold to Facebook for a billion dollars in 2012, when it had only thirteen employees.

Even in this age of inequality, there's nothing as unequal as the distribution of success in Silicon Valley. One of Hoffman's venture-capital friends, Mike Maples, Jr., estimates that of the roughly thirty thousand tech startups a year, only ten will wind up representing ninety-seven per cent of the total value of all of them, and one will represent as much value as all the others combined.

A rigorous study of twenty years' worth of Silicon Valley startups by two economists—Robert Hall, of Stanford, and Susan Woodward, of Sand Hill Econometrics—found that almost three-quarters of company founders who get venture funding (a category that represents only a small minority of those who try to get venture funding) wind up making nothing. Venture capital is overwhelmingly oriented toward

speed, big ideas, and the quest for the obsessive, super-smart, rule-breaking entrepreneur-hero.

There is some aesthetic variation within Silicon Valley—Sand Hill Road offices have hardwood floors and corporate art on the walls, San Francisco offices have exposed-brick walls and open workspaces—but everybody is intense, casual, sleep-deprived, and preoccupied with launches of companies and products. Meetings at Greylock have a suppressed ferocity, as if there were a competition for who among the partners comes across as the most low-key.

Does this founder have the right degree of fanatical commitment to his idea? How can the partners build out the team from the network of talent Greylock maintains? Can the user base double every month? How powerful are the company's natural enemies, in government and business? How early can Greylock invest in a company, and how big a share can it get?

At the moment, Silicon Valley is preoccupied by companies such as Uber and Airbnb (where Hoffman is a board member), which use mobile devices to create marketplaces that instantly bring together buyers and sellers. The Grey-

lock partners hear a lot of pitches from companies with cute one-word names and bright logos (Meerkat, Sprig, Nextdoor, Vessel, Operator) that aim at "disrupting" some existing set of economic arrangements. At least in conversation, nobody is safe: education, health-care delivery, media, national currencies.

In 1999, after Hoffman sold SocialNet, he went to work for PayPal, which Peter Thiel had just started. It still stands as a model for Silicon Valley businesses, partly because of the subsequent success of its executives—including Thiel, Hoffman, and Elon Musk, of Tesla and SpaceX—but mainly because it helped establish a number of lasting principles. One is extreme adaptability. PayPal began as a security system for the PalmPilot. It evolved into a system for processing transactions on eBay, the world's first successful online marketplace.

Hoffman's most important job at PayPal was to negotiate with the outside world. As he puts it, "Relative to the rest of the crew, I had a massively better idea of where another person was coming from and how to bridge the gap." One of Silicon Valley's favorite maxims is: "It's better to beg for



forgiveness than to ask for permission.” PayPal invoked this maxim a lot.

The year Hoffman started at PayPal, eBay acquired a competing service and wanted PayPal to fail. Hoffman persuaded eBay that if it simply cut off PayPal’s access to its site the Justice Department’s antitrust division might step in. The division was suing Microsoft for cutting off Windows users’ access to Netscape Navigator, a competitor to its Internet browser.

Hoffman was especially good at finding some degree of moderation in relations with the world as it exists, without abandoning aggressive behavior. He learned from the negative example of Napster—the early music-file-sharing program, which was so indifferent to copyright law that it went out of business after two years—and opted for compromise rather than total defiance.

PayPal was not in a natural state of harmony with many banking laws and regulations, at home and abroad. In 2002, for example, Hoffman took care of one such problem by persuading an influential friend in Japan to arrange for PayPal to do business there through a Web browser instead of incorporating as a bank. In October, 2001, when the passage of the Patriot Act severely damaged PayPal’s second line of business—handling cash transactions for gamblers—Hoffman helped arrange a quick sale of PayPal to eBay.

Just a few years ago, it would have seemed fanciful to assume that one could algorithmically establish enough trust among total strangers for them to buy and sell things from each other without having any direct contact. Rating and reputation systems were new. Anything involving currency had to flow through regulated financial institutions. And it wasn’t yet clear that it was more important to build up a big user base than to make money. Early on, PayPal paid people five and then ten dollars for getting someone else to join the service, which produced losses in the tens of millions a year.

At PayPal, Hoffman helped invent the technique of converting a large user community into a political lobbying organization: users flood the authorities with e-mails protesting whatever contemplated action stands in the way of

## BREASTS

I always thought  
they were small—  
my breasts.

But they filled  
my baby’s mouth.  
& my lover’s tongue  
loves them,  
& my memory is  
filled with all  
the pleasure they gave  
over the years,

while my mother’s  
100-year-old breasts  
still hang  
waiting.

For what?  
For the tongue  
of God?  
For the spinning Fates  
to release them  
into the clouds  
so she can remember  
how to paint  
again?

The sky awaits,  
& earth itself.

She used to say,  
we all  
go back to earth  
& become  
beautiful tomatoes,  
peas, carrots.

She was an  
ecologist  
before the term  
was invented.

O Mother  
I love you  
despite  
everything.

Peas, carrots,  
cauliflower.  
Even cabbage.

—*Erica Jong*

the company’s ambitions. Silicon Valley has since applied this method repeatedly, notably in Washington in 2012, when Congress was considering legislation to tighten copyright law, and in New York in 2015, when Mayor Bill de Blasio made a move to restrict Uber.

After eBay bought PayPal, Hoffman began investing in social networks. In 2003, for seven hundred thousand dollars, he and Pincus bought the Six Degrees patent, a methodology for constructing social networks. That year, Hoffman officially incorporated a new social network. It was like SocialNet, except that this time people would use their real names and focus on their professional lives. He called it LinkedIn.

Hoffman saw the enormous potential of Mark Zuckerberg’s invention, too. In June, 2004, he set up a meeting between Zuckerberg and Thiel, which led to Thiel’s first five-hundred-thousand-dollar investment in Facebook. The next year, just after Zuckerberg’s move from his Harvard dorm room to

Silicon Valley, Hoffman and Pincus each bought half of one per cent of Facebook for thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars. Hoffman could have been a lead investor, but he passed up the opportunity, because he thought it would look as if he were hedging his bet on LinkedIn. At the time, the most popular social-networking sites, like Friendster and MySpace, didn’t focus on business; and the most popular employment sites, like Monster.com, didn’t focus on social networks. It wasn’t as obvious to others as it was to Hoffman that a business-oriented social network could work.

By 2008, Facebook had a hundred million members; LinkedIn had only thirty-two million. Facebook still has a far higher membership than LinkedIn. People at LinkedIn worried that Facebook might try to take over its niche, but Hoffman was convinced that people would want to have separate business and personal online networks. LinkedIn kept encouraging users to maintain detailed, regularly updated,

elaborately connected public profiles as the permanent foundation of their careers. One of Hoffman's investing mistakes came in 2013, when he passed up a chance for Greylock to meet with the team behind Snapchat, the wildly popular disappearing-message service. "I didn't get the ephemerality," he said.

For the first two years, Hoffman concentrated on growth, so LinkedIn had no revenues. (Today, most of LinkedIn's \$2.2 billion in annual income is from fees paid by recruiters for access to extra information about the site's users.) Almost from the beginning, LinkedIn offered members the opportunity to upload their entire e-mail contact list, which generates large numbers of automatic invitations. Hoffman is aware that some people find this annoying, but that is a problem only if it impedes growth. As he puts it, "People may say, 'I'm getting all these fucking invitations,' but you don't tune it too high or too low."

In 2006, LinkedIn decided to make all profiles partly public, so that when you type someone's name into a Google search, that person's LinkedIn profile is one of the top results. LinkedIn uses every possible algorithm to suggest people you might want to add to your network, and constantly tweaks its products based on the data it receives about what's popular among its users. LinkedIn also harnesses its members' game-playing competitiveness by, for example, listing the users' number of connections, up to a maximum of five hundred. (Every conference room in Hoffman's building at LinkedIn is named after a canonical game: Pac-Man, Tetris, Space Invaders.) LinkedIn went public in the spring of 2011, just after it had exceeded a hundred million users, and Hoffman officially became a billionaire. He owns twelve per cent of the company and fifty-eight per cent of the voting shares.

To imagine that at this point the people at LinkedIn would have semi-retired in order to spend time trekking in Bhutan would be to misunderstand the culture of Silicon Valley. One former LinkedIn executive told me that six years ago, when Hoffman appointed Jeff Weiner C.E.O., the engineers were initially suspicious, because Weiner wasn't one of them. But somebody analyzed his presence on the LinkedIn

site and discovered that usually the only time he wasn't on it was between 3:30 and 4 A.M. (Weiner's office insists that today he stays offline between 11 P.M. and 5 A.M.) Hoffman travels three or four times a year to China, LinkedIn's fastest-growing market, and he is impressed by the Chinese work ethic. He told one conference audience about a startup in Beijing that was able to ship its first product in just six months, by renting a block of hotel rooms and requiring all employees to live there, taking breaks only to eat, sleep, and exercise. LinkedIn's forced march toward the economic graph and the network age continues.

These dreams may never be fully realized. But what if they are? Hoffman and LinkedIn represent the distilled essence of Silicon Valley's vision of the economic future. People will switch jobs every two or three years; indeed, the challenge is to prevent them from switching more often. Hoffman's friend Evan Williams, the co-founder of Twitter and the founder of Medium, showed me around Medium's San Francisco office. Gesturing toward the open workspace, he said, "Everyone out there has had a call from a recruiter this week." Hoffman's most recent book, "The Alliance," argues that it should be con-

sidered honorable to remain in a job for as unthinkable long as four years.

Because Silicon Valley jobs don't carry with them twentieth-century expectations about security and benefits, employers compensate people as much as possible with stock, so that they think of themselves as owners rather than employees. It's assumed that what everybody really wants is to quit and create a startup, and, for those who aren't in tech, the future as imagined in Silicon Valley may not entail full-time employment at all. Instead, people would assemble their economic lives through elements provided by online marketplace companies from Silicon Valley: a little Uber driving here, a little TaskRabbiting there.

If you grant Hoffman's premise that the networked economy is the new model, you can view its advent with excitement or with unease. Hoffman likes to cite a statistic from a United Nations paper on sustainable development goals: the global economy will need six hundred million new jobs over the next twenty years, and existing business can provide only ten to twenty million of them. The rest, he claims, will have to come from startups, so societies everywhere will have to reorient themselves significantly in order to make entrepreneurship easier.

That is the object of all Hoffman's



*"Louie, you apply for a loan while Rocco heads in through this door and files for bankruptcy."*





*"Sure, I wanted my hair back, but not my seventies hair."*

political and philanthropic activity. As he told one visitor, "I'm trying to get politicians to understand that solving this problem is about facilitation of a network, as opposed to"—sarcastically—"the New Deal." He has a soaring optimism in the power of his model to make life better for everybody, and believes that the pre-Internet arrangements can't do that. He told me that he has concluded over the past year that the American political parties are too entrenched to solve the country's problems, so he's unlikely, in this election cycle, to be making another big contribution to Priorities USA, the Democratic Super PAC he supported in 2012. (Thus far, among the Presidential candidates, he has had private meetings with Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush, but has not made up his mind whom to support for President.) What he's trying to achieve, he says, is "massive, outsize, discontinuous impact."

Not everyone in Silicon Valley is as sanguine about the technology-enabled

economic revolution. There is an ongoing conversation about the uncertain economic future for middle-class and working-class Americans who don't have technology skills. Joe Kraus, an old friend of Hoffman's who works for Google's venture-capital division, told me, "My instinct is that creating the valley elsewhere hasn't been successful. It would be presumptuous to say, 'Of course it will work elsewhere.' I just don't know."

John Lilly, one of Hoffman's partners at Greylock, was openly pessimistic: "I'm more lefty than your typical Silicon Valley guy. I believe actions have consequences, and shit like that. Clearly, wealth is becoming more concentrated, and the network takes a larger and larger share." He suspects that the twentieth century was an anomaly. "There was no middle class, then there was a middle class, now we're back where we started—it's hollowed out. I don't see where the middle class is going to come from. You'll start seeing more conversation

about a guaranteed income. Right now, there's an absolute belief that markets can solve everything—software can."

Even Mike Maples, who describes himself as someone who believes in "free people and the free market," told me that when he went to Dallas to talk to Glenn Beck, the conservative talk-show host, he was surprised to find that Beck was concerned about how his audience would be affected by the economic future that Maples was describing. "He said, 'What do you say to a guy like me? How do you answer the argument that there are forty million people in red states who are going to get displaced?'"

Hoffman's new world of online platforms, marketplaces, and networks produces companies that emerge from the brutal competition among startups as big top-down organizations with quasi-monopoly status: Amazon in retailing, Facebook in social networking, Google in search, LinkedIn in business networking. Once network effects really kick in, they create a powerful barrier to entry for potential rivals: the more effort you've put into your identity on Facebook or LinkedIn or YouTube, the more difficult it becomes for you to switch to a competitor. One of Peter Thiel's favorite bad-boy notions is that competition is "antipodal to capitalism": once a company becomes successful, it should try to establish a monopoly position, so that it can charge the kind of prices and make the kind of profits that are available only to companies without meaningful competitors.

Perhaps one class of people will live inside big companies, and a larger class will be part of a looser networked community. The more sincerely you believe that a better world is emerging from this process—a world of rapid improvement in the lives of billions of people—the more wholeheartedly you can work to hasten its advent. It's hard to imagine that there could be a truer believer than Reid Hoffman.

On the evening after his dinner with Mark Pincus, Hoffman met another member of his network at a popular Silicon Valley restaurant called Fuki Sushi. Hoffman had hoped to gather a number of friends to play his favorite board game, Settlers of Catan, in which the players compete to create

the fastest-growing notional settlements. (He has produced a version for his friends called Startups of Silicon Valley, with the same rules but different nomenclature: products instead of settlements, disrupters instead of robbers, talent instead of wheat.) But people were too busy, so he had dinner instead with James Manyika, who works in Silicon Valley for McKinsey, the consulting firm. Usually, Hoffman does not make reservations under his own name, lest he be assailed by supplicants, but in this case he had, and he had been given a small private dining room. Manyika, a tall, elegant man of forty-nine who grew up in Zimbabwe and became an engineering faculty member at Oxford, arrived a little late from a meeting with Marissa Mayer, the chief executive of Yahoo.

"They seem to have decided this is my room," Hoffman said. "I've eaten here with Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg."

"How's Michelle?" Manyika said.

"She's trying to figure out the cadence of her life—spirituality versus the rhythms of Silicon Valley."

Even before the list-making ritual had taken place, Hoffman and Manyika were off. Did Manyika know of a caterer who specializes in African-diaspora food, whom Hoffman could use at one of the monthly dinners he gives for a group of chief executives of technology companies? (Yes.) How could Hoffman be helpful to Ashish Thakkar, a bright young man who runs businesses in Africa from a base in Dubai, whom Hoffman had met at Davos and who had visited him at Greylock? (Hoffman and Manyika would co-host a dinner for Thakkar.) Would Hoffman join President Obama's Global Development Council, of which Manyika is vice-chairman? (Yes.) How was Hoffman's next book, on friendship, coming along? (It would follow the book on "blitzscaling.")

A waiter entered. "I have an algorithm," Hoffman said. "If it's a good place, order the special. If it's a bad place, order what they can't screw up." They ordered the special.

After a brisk trot through a few other topics, Hoffman said, "I've started spinning up on the whole A.I. and ethics thing."

"You're one of the few people thinking about this," Manyika said. He had recently arranged a meeting between Hoffman and a delegation of Catholic priests. "They found the conversation very interesting. They're going to have a meeting in Rome soon."

"I owe Michelle a trip to Rome."

That would be great, Manyika said, because then Hoffman could also meet Ignazio Marino, the mayor of Rome, who wants to "digitize" the Eternal City. "He's going to come here," Manyika said. "He came once and had dinner with Larry Page. He'd like to create a small group here."

Hoffman said he'd loved the meeting with the priests. "I thought it would be only about social media. Instead, it was about A.I." Artificial intelligence touches all his most passionate interests: philosophy, science fiction, potential business ventures, the coming shape of society—or, if society implies human beings, the coming shape of world civilization post-society. "My high-line answer was we're so far from the subject it's hard to know. The challenge is figuring out the unknown unknowns. We are the model of an intelligent being. But any form of A.I. is actually a different species. It's not copies of human beings. You're really seriously jumping into the deep end. How do we create ethical A.I.? We have to address this in a more spiritual way. How is the ethical algorithm developed?"

Hoffman told Manyika he'd think about giving a talk on artificial intelligence. It would give him the chance to address some big questions that have been on his mind lately: "What are the ethical outcomes of life systems? Could you imagine a system that decided it would be better to eliminate human beings? You could make an argument. You're screwing up the climate, you're killing off other species."

It was the end of a long day of meetings at LinkedIn—philanthropy, product reviews, a visitor from Hollywood—but Hoffman had lit on a scalable topic. His arms rose above his head, as if pulled by invisible wires. "Is what we can create an ethical system, or a system that doesn't contravene humans? There will be some people who think whatever's right is to let the next step in evolu-

tion play out. That's a scary thought."

"There's a nonzero chance that A.I. will be smarter than humans," Manyika said.

"Isn't that one hundred per cent? Isn't it just a time coefficient? If we survive at all. Nobody knowledgeable thinks it's zero. Everyone knows it's ten to a hundred years."

"There are people looking at this," Manyika said. He and Hoffman were hoping that this was the kind of issue that might engage Pope Francis.

It was time for the next item on Manyika's list: "Jobs. Middle class." Manyika was one of a roster of people, including five Nobel Prize-winning economists, who, in June, had signed a statement called "Open Letter on the Digital Economy," which called attention to the problem of dramatic technological advances and stagnant growth in income or wages for most Americans. The letter called for an ambitious program of new research and changes in the policies of government and business.

Although Hoffman usually likes being associated with big liberal-minded reformist efforts, he had not signed the letter. "My LinkedIn team was hesitant," he said, a little apologetically.

"Eric didn't sign, either," Manyika said.

"I agree with the thrust of it. We should do something."

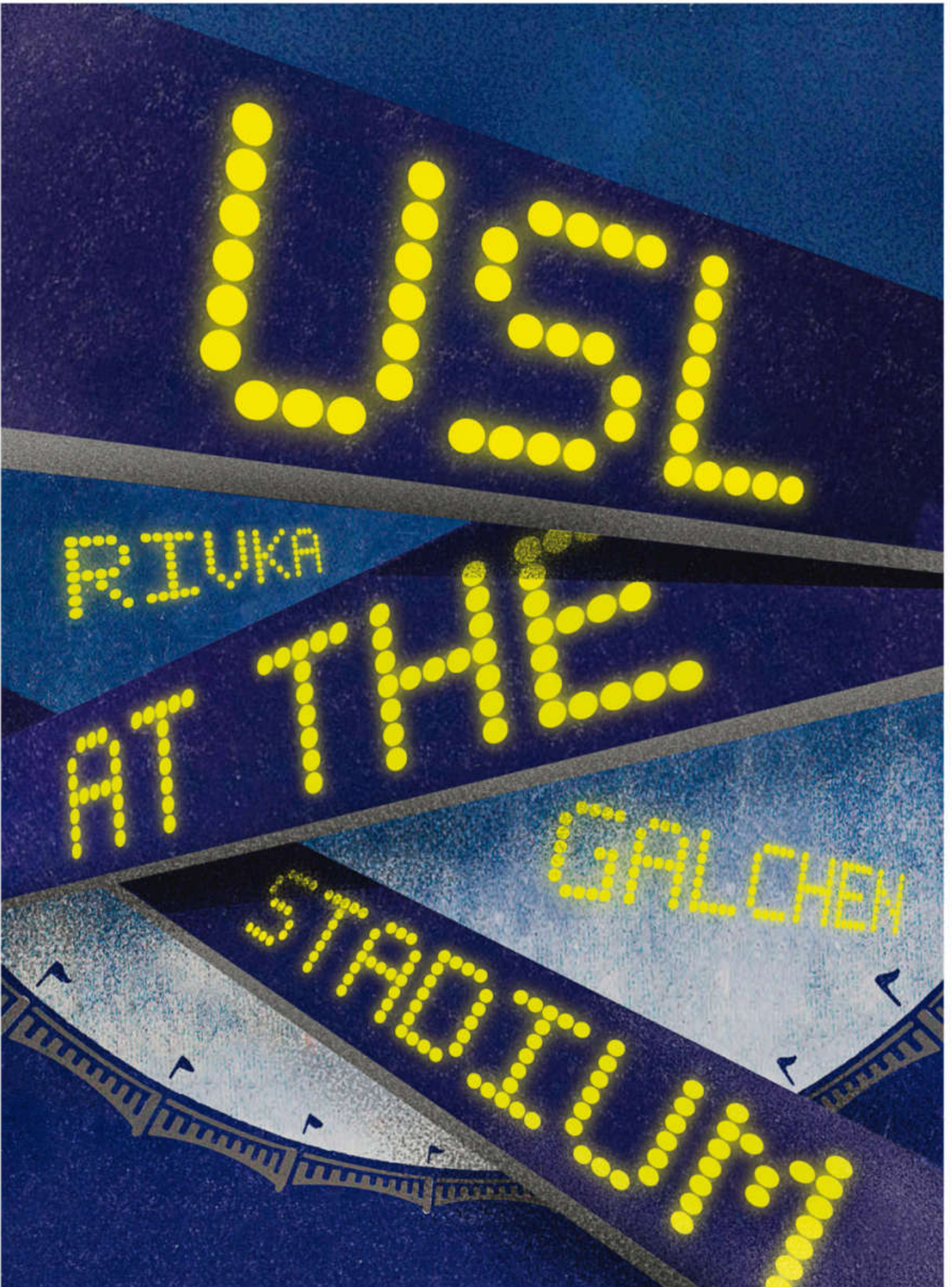
Manyika understood that not every chief executive in Silicon Valley could sign the statement, but he was gently trying to pull Hoffman to the left, and he knew how to frame the argument so that it would appeal to him. He went on, "We cannot ignore this problem. Right now, everybody's punting. We know the share of income that goes to wages is a declining portion, compared with capital expenditures. What does that mean for jobs? Entrepreneurship is part of the answer. Mass-scale entrepreneurship. Before you even get to A.I."

"You have to be able to let people adapt," Hoffman said. "You have to have cheap resources to put across the whole system. How do you get inclusion within the tech ecosystem?"

"Very few of the programs have scale," Manyika said.

"You have to scale to infinite," Hoffman said. ♦





The game on Sunday had a 2 P.M. start, and Usl was featured on the Jumbotron intermittently from 4:02 to 4:09. By eight-thirty, his home phone was ringing. His home phone never rang. It was a holdover from another time. His mother had told him that it was essential, a matter of safety—for hurricanes, or blackouts, or terrorist attacks. You never knew what could happen until it happened. She had insisted on paying the bill so that Usl would keep the landline. She had pleaded, “Please grant me permission to protect my child,” and so he had.

The landline was ringing because Usl had become an Internet sensation. Usl had been sleeping when he appeared on the Jumbotron at the Yankees game; the cameras and the commentators had turned on Usl numerous times, and at length, and he had slept through it all. It wasn’t until the voices of strangers over that old-fashioned telephone alerted him that he understood how widely watched his sleep had been. Now a gentle feminine voice pitched him: “What we’re thinking is that you come into the office and we’ll take a top-quality, nice photo of you. We really love the idea that you get a chance to present yourself. You’ll recap-ture control over your image.”

Usl looked online to reconfirm who he was in the eyes of the world:

Fatty cow that needs two seats at all time and represent symbol of failure

had been posted one minute earlier in the comments section under a YouTube clip. The clip had more than seventy thousand views. Wasn’t it really just footage of a man dreaming? No one seemed to see it that way. Usl was only twenty-eight years old—could his life already be ruined? Could he save it?

Usl told the woman on the phone that he needed to think about her idea, that he would call her back.

He called Gregory.

“People at a newspaper are not your allies,” Gregory said. Gregory was Usl’s friend but also his boss. Usl worked the buyback end of Gregory’s storefront diamond-district place. Customers ascended the back stairs to consult with Usl about their old jewelry, and Usl weighed, assessed, proposed prices, bought. Gregory liked to say that it was a sultanate there on the second floor; the sultan was

Usl. Now Gregory said, “These are people who demeaned Eliot Spitzer over private issues, who—”

“But people are saying untrue things about me—”

“You’ll be extending the time that you’re at the center of attention—”

“If you were me—”

“I’m not you. I’m not interested in fame. I am me. I’m interested in coming to work. I hope you’re not thinking of not coming in to work tomorrow.”

The angle of the camera in the footage was particularly unflattering—distorting, really. It wasn’t a strong likeness.

Usl called the voice from the newspaper back. “I will come in.”

The now slightly less kind-sounding woman informed Usl that if he made it in before 11 A.M. they would run the photo online the same day.

Usl trembled.

Or was the trembling elsewhere?

They had found his cell-phone number?

“I love you!” the text message read. It was his mother. “You are a great and successful and handsome and very good and nice man!!!” Even she had seen the footage? Usl’s mother was very loving, had always been very loving. Good mothers are bad mothers, Usl thought. Only bad, mean mothers prepare you for what is to come. If Usl was ever a mother, whatever, a father, he wanted to be a bad one.

More calls came in, through the night, from television programs that had once seemed to occur in inaccessible lands but that turned out to be really less than thirty minutes away; they would send a car service. Usl couldn’t sleep. When, as a child, he encountered characters six feet tall, fuzzy, offering hugs, or flyers, or hot dogs, he had been frightened. He unplugged the phone.

Then there was a knock at the door. Was he O. J. Simpson? They were pursuing him everywhere.

“It’s me! It’s Berge!”

Berge was Usl’s neighbor. Usl let him in.

Berge said, “You’ve had a huge piece of luck. Huge. I know you may not see it, but this is the luckiest day of your life.”

“I’m very tired,” Usl said, and then felt ambushed by fresh shame—after all, why was he so tired? “People laugh, but I was sleeping because I haven’t been getting my sleep. When you don’t sleep, you’re

not yourself. When you don’t sleep, you find yourself sleeping all the time.”

“You’re going to sue,” Berge declared. Sue somebody. Berge would figure it out. He wouldn’t charge—he would just take fifteen per cent upon collection. Did Usl feel damaged? Yes, Usl did feel damaged. Then there should be damages. Berge had recently passed the bar. He wasn’t lying about that, Usl thought. Berge often shared his magazines with Usl; he was a nice guy, basically.

“But I can’t sue thousands of people,” Usl said. “It’s thousands of people who have damaged me.” He caught a glimpse of his screen:

He’s dreaming of cupcakes.

“No, thousands wouldn’t be sensible,” Berge said. “We’ll sue the Yankees.”

“But I love the Yankees.”

“We’ll sue the Stadium.”

“I love the Stadium. I’ve been happy there.”

“You’re very stressed. Let me figure it out for you.”

By 1 A.M., Berge had prepared papers for Usl to sign—Berge was also a notary, he said—naming a broadcasting corporation. “They won’t take it personally,” Berge assured him. “It’s business.”

By Tuesday, views of the YouTube footage had exceeded a million. Usl abandoned the Internet, turned on the radio for escape, and there learned that he, Usl, was a too sensitive behemoth who needed to be \*#&\$ed in his cookie-dough face; also, that he should eat celery. Normally, if you heard people talking about you on the radio it meant that you were crazy, since of course no one on the radio was talking about you, and if you thought that people on the radio were talking about you, as had happened to Usl’s uncle, then you were supposed to go see somebody, a professional. Usl didn’t want to see anybody.

“Gold resists attacks by almost all individual acids” appeared on his cell phone. A year earlier he had subscribed to Gem-Facts by text; at first it had bothered him, the repeated disappointment of thinking a person had contacted him and then discovering it was just an impersonal update.

Usl called Gregory again. “I can’t come in today,” he said.

“Take a joke,” Gregory said. “They’re



talking things they don't know. Have those talkers ever handled gold rings like they were chickpeas? They're nobodies. So what if they say you're fat. You are fat. I'm also fat. It's not like it's not true."

Gregory was a cheerful man, and the son of a Holocaust survivor; he had six children, and he sometimes wore a T-shirt that read, "I Have the Body of a God: Buddha." "If you wanted to not be fat, you would be not fat," he said.

"It's not just that," Usl said. The two sports announcers, Mike and Mike—voices Usl knew well, had thought of as friends of his, in a way—had said of sleeping Usl the kinds of things that people say. Unpleasant things. But the words of those false friends had then bloomed into much worse words, typed up by viewers whose numbers were growing without perceptible limit. Usl was reading:

Please rid us of your nasty pimpled ass and put a shotgun in your mouth tonight, I'll buy the shells

Then:

He is a waste of decent seats, he can sleep at the nachos stand and give a real fan a view, lol

Usl said to Gregory, "What really bothers me is that they think I don't appreciate baseball. They think I don't understand what's at stake."

"Sure. It's suicide or sniper," Gregory said. "And you don't want to be a sniper—I get it—so instead you feel really bad, you turn it on yourself. So as not to kill people. But it's also not suicide or sniper: it's just get your pants on and get on with your day. Do I have a chicken for an employee? I need a man. It's man or pansy, it's—"

Usl hung up.

Usl had been unemployed for seventeen months when he got the job with Gregory. When he started working, his mother gave him a polished blue stone to keep in his pocket, to ward off evil. Mock if you want, but the stone had worked. Usl had been enjoying his job for more than a year now. He had even made a flyer on how to detect fake gold. The magnet test was overrated, the flyer explained. In Usl's years of experience (even though it had been less than one when he made the flyer), he had seen plenty of

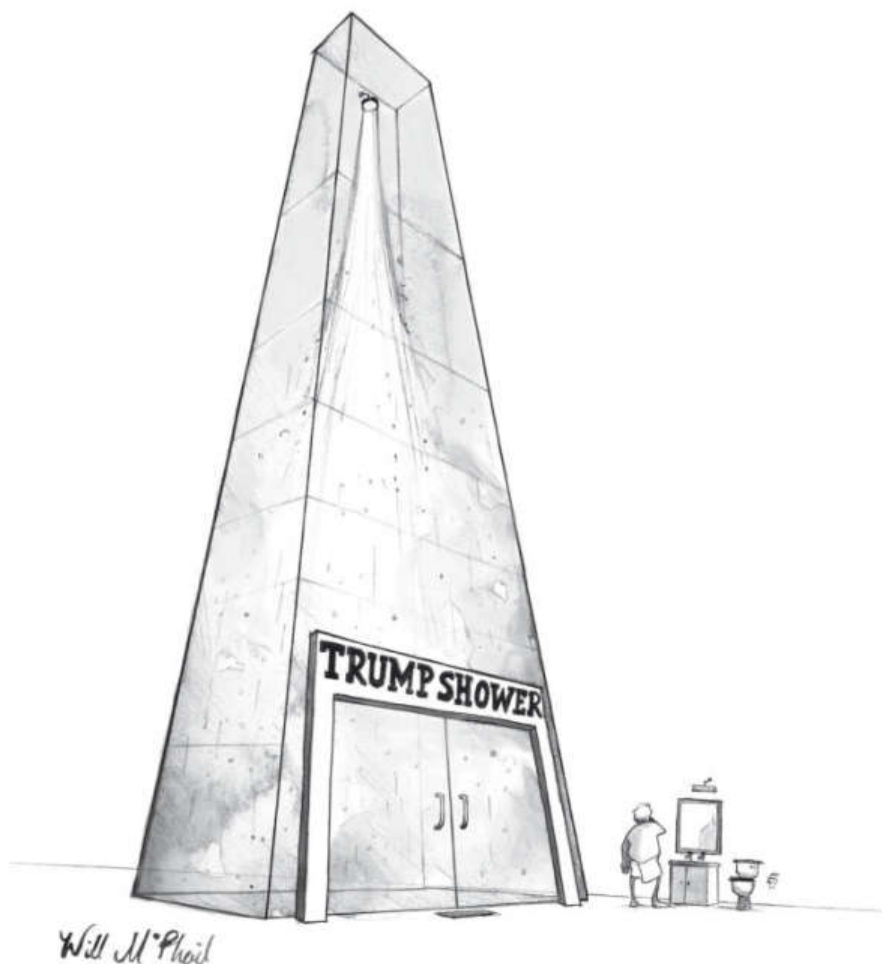
non-magnetic fake gold; recognizing real gold versus fake was about getting a feel for the weight of the thing in your hands. That flyer of Usl's had been downloaded from his open Facebook page a hundred and seventy-three times.

That had seemed like a big number. It had brought attention to Gregory's shop. Gregory kept a poster of faces with various expressions on the office wall—it was something the Chinese restaurant nearby had given them—and Gregory had written Usl's name under the face labelled "Triumphant." He had done this after an eighty-four-year-old woman, who had bought gold every birthday of her life, brought it all in to sell after seeing a horoscope that read, "Even a Gemini needs to slow down a bit once in a while, and with your ruler Mercury still moving retrograde this is the ideal time." She explained to Usl that she had visited several buyback places. She chose Usl. Because she trusted him, because she could see his goodness in the way that his hands were not bossy or deceptive. Usl had never before thought about his hands. But he did think, then, that it was true what she had said, that they were good hands.

By midday Tuesday, Usl had understood a few things. One was that he should have been in contact with his mother. Usl had not gone to the paper to be photographed; Usl had ceased to answer either of his phones. But his mother was in the papers; his mother had been photographed. In her own home, sitting in her armchair, with a red geranium plant at her side. In the caption, she was quoted: "He was very tired, because he has been working very hard. He is my son of gold." In the article, she was asked about Usl's name, which some people had said was short for "useless." She said that, no, that was not the case, that Usl had been the nickname of Usl's grandfather, Warhel, a beautiful soul who had died during a flu outbreak when he was only thirty-four. And, as for Usl himself, Usl was not a nickname, Usl was his full proper name, it was enough.

Usl called his mother.

"Someone had to tell them about the real you," she said. "Here you are—this celebrity—but the celebrity is this person who isn't you. They made me look



very old in that picture, because of the green lighting, but I'm O.K. with that, because a mother has to fix what is said about her son, whatever the cost."

"Nothing's fixed," Usl said. He had the feeling, as he often did with his mother, that he was speaking to a ghost poorly educated about the present.

"They thought you were drunk," she went on. "Many people thought that. You can't let them think that—it will affect your future employment. I explained that you drink only Diet Coke."

That bit about the Diet Coke wasn't true, but Usl let it pass. "You're destroying me," he said, albeit softly.

The truth was, Usl knew, that the photograph of his mother was not as damaging as the papers that Berge had filed on his behalf.

Who gets paid 10 million to sleep there like a fat ass. FUCK YOU FATTY.

Berge had asked for nine million dollars in damages, not ten; of course the commenters had the details wrong, had everything wrong. Usl should have followed his old rule: no decisions after midnight. It was said that the filing was full of misspellings and grammatical errors.

What a loser. And now he's suing? Double loser. His suit is the only thing that brought the world's attention to him. Triple loser. And if there is any justice on this earth, this case will be tossed out and he'll be ridiculed and humiliated all over. We're dealing with a quadruple loser at the very least, folks.

Berge was always full of ideas. One should stay away from people with ideas.

Americas pre-occupation with sports is obscene. Can't tell you how many kids I know can recite batting averages, game plays, but don't know the first 5 books of the Bible. Nor could they recite an account beyond Noah's Ark, and when they do its Hollywoodized to the point of recognizable gibberish. They Idolize these players, who in turn Idolize Money. Then these Sports-gods humiliate their fans, and their fans try to capitalize, and the lawyers capitalize. Who ends up loosing?

Ignominy was the only type of celebrity around. At least for Usl and everyone he knew.

"I love you," his mother texted again. "I love you very much. I love you very, very much. You are a strong man. They are trying to hunt down and destroy you. But you are a cheetah."

And then, automated delivery: "Gold is unaffected by oxygen at any temperature." If only.

Say what you will, Usl wanted to get a slice. Why not? He would leave his apartment. He could do it. Usl stepped into the elevator, which today smelled like urine; also there were bugs sun-printed in the case of the light fixture. He normally enjoyed his elevator; it had a mechanical floor-indicator arrow that still worked. It was classy. Just as he himself was classy. That was the truth. He worked with gold, which did not rust.

As he stepped out of the building, he saw three of his neighbors playing dominoes. One held up a newspaper and shook it at him, in fellowship or menace, he didn't know. He had more than once dreamed of everyone recognizing him, of extending a series of half waves to acknowledge his fellows with respect as he passed them on the street; now he walked by his neighbors quickly, panting slightly.

He ordered a slice of pepper-and-mushroom. The server put a slice of pepperoni on a paper plate. Usl re-stated what he wanted—pepper-and-mushroom. Mexican pop was playing loudly. The server had a red bandanna tied back over his thick black hair. Always Mexicans at the Italian places, Usl thought. The server squinted at Usl. A squint of recognition? "Pep-per-and-mush-room," Usl reënnunciated. The guy gave him a second slice. "Just one slice," Usl said. "Just the pepper-and-mushroom. No pepperoni."

It was worked out. Nobody had shouted. A triumph.

"Yo, thanks," Usl said.

"Yo? It's not the barrio, man," the server said. "Be polite."

People were disgusting. You gave your heart, you tried to be considerate, and who cared? They thought Usl could be pushed around. Why did it seem so clear that he could be pushed around? How did they know? Other people slept at baseball games. The games were sometimes boring. There were commercials between innings, and also commercials mid-inning. The batters took their time getting to the box, as if nothing else in the world, no one else in the world, existed. It was selfish, really. There were millions and millions and millions of other people who were treated with more respect than Usl. Maybe billions. Some

# PORT

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of them stupid, some fat, some ugly, whatever it was, but that was the truth, Usl didn't invent it. Who did they think they were—Brad Pitt? They couldn't all be Brad Pitt. If Brad Pitt had criticized him, that would be a different thing.

One day they weren't going to have Usl to kick around anymore. One day they'd be sorry. This was among the things that he hadn't said. That he kept not saying. He had not assumed another identity, or his own, and pursued the pursuers online. Oh, he had been tempted, but that was what the Others would do. He had not told the Others what he thought of them.

Usl was finishing his pizza when a man in an orange T-shirt and a hard hat, holding a large soda in one hand, made eye contact with him. Then he raised a fist in the air and shouted, "Yankees!"

Instinctively, Usl raised his fist in return. As if in the childishly imagined kingdom of fellowship and dignity.

"It's you, right?" the hard-hat man said.

Usl said, "No."

But already the man in the hard hat was signalling to others around him, shouting, calling things out. The hats were gathering.

Usl could find a small makeshift hut in the woods, not far from a beach. He had seen one once; he was going to go and live there. When the time seemed right, in maybe ten or fifteen years, he

would return to civilization. He would be very fit, from living a life in nature. He would say his name was Dave. He would tell people how they should live. They would listen.

But he at least owed Gregory notice that he would be leaving, that he would be gone forever, sort of. Also, his paycheck would be useful. He was owed eight days. Truth be told, he wanted to run the idea by Gregory. Gregory, he realized, was like a dad to him. He would get his blessing.

Just in front of Gregory's, as Usl was staring at his phone—"You are my star and my sunshine!"—someone tapped him on the shoulder.

By primal reflex, Usl nearly hit the man, shouted, defending his body.

The man was saying, "Hey, hey, hey, sorry. I was just saying hello."

Usl looked up fully from his phone and realized it was Andre, the guy who regularly stood in front of Gregory's, handing out flyers for the business. Andre was a very slim and fairly straightforwardly good-looking black man; his appearance, today, seemed like a reproach. Usl said, "I apologize, I'm in such a high state of alert."

"A silver alert?" Andre asked.

"A what?" Usl said, his fear returning.

"Forget it, relax, forget it. I meant on your phone."

"What's silver, what's alert?" Usl said. Was he being asked about Google Alerts? About GemFacts? How was everyone

allowed inside his head, his computer, his phone, his dreams.

"Like a silver alert, for when old people go missing," Andre said. "Amber alert for when a kid is missing, silver for old people. I think there's other colors, too. Sorry, I know you're under stress. It's just been on my mind. I was wondering how you get one of those alerts sent out. Like, once we found my mom near where the buses are parked, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. She had no idea how to get home. She lives right near here, but she gets lost. And I'm not in a total panic about her, but she's not answering my calls this morning, so I was asking. Is your mom old? Is she right in the head?"

Andre had always seemed to Usl like a man with girlfriends, never like a man with a mom. Usl still had the polished good-luck stone from his mother. She was always trying, she was still trying. Usl said, "You could go look for her."

"Tell Gregory I'm back in thirty minutes," Andre said.

"They're nobodies, Usl," Gregory said when he went inside. "They are small, small people who can't find their own dicks because they are so small."

"You're a terrible man, Gregory. You're one of them."

"I'm just trying to cheer you up."

"By being a monster."

"Not nice."

"You're like a disease. For all I know, you started the comments about me. What do I know? Evil isn't choosy. For all I know, you gave them my phone number." Usl had yelled at no one yet; he was now yelling at Gregory. He found that he had quite a lot to say. He said Gregory didn't even care about Andre's mom.

"You know what, Usl? I'm going to tell you something that maybe you don't want to hear."

Usl was ready for it.

Gregory said, "I'm going to tell you that I love you, and that I care for you."

Usl began to cry. He cried a little more. Eventually he said, "I'm just so tired. When I'm tired, I make bad decisions."

"I understand," Gregory said. "You know, scientists used to ask, Why do we sleep? What is the purpose of sleep? But then other scientists said that these are the wrong questions. The question is, Why are we so often awake? What is the

purpose of being awake? I mean, besides for ten minutes of eating, a little bit of romance. Once that's over, why are we not immediately again asleep?"

Gregory went on, "And so I said to myself one day, about this sleep question: This is the answer to the problem of evil. The question isn't, Why is there evil? The question is, Why is there good? I mean, it's not, Why is there the bubonic plague and Putin? It's, Why is there spring and love and barbecue? Why is there ever an unrequired kind act? Look, I'm just telling you how I go about my life, because I am old and you are still young. There isn't supposed to be any gold in the crust of the earth. It's a very heavy element. All the gold should be in the molten core. Unreachable for us. So why do we keep finding gold in the crust? How did it get there? Some people say it's meteorites that fell, that crashed, and that this catastrophe splashed up gold. That's the only reason we come across it. I don't subscribe to this theory. But I am sharing it with you."

Usl's sleep at the baseball game had been a sweet one. Sifting past and beyond the ensuing terror, he found that he could remember that sleep, he could remember his dream. He had been at a really nice desk, of a dark, well-polished wood. He recognized the desk; it had made an appearance in real life. When he was just a kid—a real kid, not a twenty-eight-year-old who felt like a kid but a twelve- or thirteen-year-old who really was that—he had been delivering something to a lawyer, to a proper lawyer. That lawyer had sat at such a desk. But before he saw it little Usl had waited outside the lawyer's office, outside but inside, inside the outer chamber, in the air-conditioning, and the secretary, a gentle-faced woman who looked a little bit like the pretty woman who drove a taxi in that old TV show, had asked him if he wanted some water. She had brought him some, in a cone-shaped paper cup, from the water cooler. This, Usl thought, must be real life. He must have been thirsty at the game. He must have been waiting. ♦

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# THE CRITICS



## MUSICAL EVENTS

# GOLDEN OLDIES

*An onslaught of Italian opera, at the Met.*

BY ALEX ROSS

The atmosphere during the first week of the new Metropolitan Opera season was less dire than it was this time last year, when a twenty-two-million-dollar deficit loomed, management and labor had all but come to blows over a threatened lockout, and busloads of vitriolic protesters tried to shut down John Adams's "The Death of Klinghoffer." This fall, politicians have spared us thoughts about operas they have not seen; mutinous mutterings, whether from unions or donors, have subsided; and Peter Gelb, the Met's general manager, is enjoying a flurry of good press, following the announcement that the deficit has given way to a million-dollar surplus. To be sure, this correction resulted from cuts in expenses, not from gains in attendance. No one believes that the crisis is over; an air of desperation lingers. There is even talk of allowing a donor to rename the Met. With the names David Geffen and David H. Koch emblazoned elsewhere on Lincoln Center Plaza, a terrifying opening exists for Donald Trump.

The Met's financial progress has coincided with artistic retrenchment. The current season is one of the most conservative in recent memory—essentially, an eight-month festival of nineteenth-century Italian opera. Of twenty-five works in repertory, only two, "Turandot" and "Lulu," were written in the past hundred years. Furthermore, the revolution in production style that Gelb promised when he took over, nearly a decade ago, hasn't happened. There have been a few

scandal-making shows, but nothing markedly bolder than Robert Wilson's 1998 "Lohengrin" and other scattered experiments of the Joseph Volpe era. This season's first new staging—an "Otello" directed by Bartlett Sher, with sets by Es Devlin—is yet another spare, cool, vaguely modernistic affair, with sliding translucent walls and flickering projections juxtaposed with an array of period costumes. The preceding "Otello," by Elijah Moshinsky, which was first seen in 1994, was no masterpiece, but it had more dramatic verve.

The Met isn't the only American house playing it safe. David Gockley, the outgoing head of the San Francisco Opera, has argued that opera is a "bourgeois art form," and that new work should be commissioned only if it speaks a language that "audiences can immediately embrace." The obvious riposte, other than to question the continued existence of a bourgeoisie, is to point out that some of the most beloved operas in the repertory—"Tristan und Isolde," "Carmen," "Madama Butterfly"—weren't exactly opening-night hits. It's odd to hear this from Gockley, who, when he led the Houston Grand Opera, introduced Adams's "Nixon in China," a modern classic that many people found oppressive at first hearing. Gelb, to his credit, is less cautious: works by Kaija Saariaho and Thomas Adès, hardly Puccini sound-alikes, are scheduled for coming years. For the most part, though, this season's Met is a time warp. If the brochure had gone out to passengers booked for

the Titanic, they would have been puzzled more by the paper stock than by the repertory.

If the Met can't seem to escape the John Jacob Astor era, it should at least offer voices of beauty and power. The Italian onslaught that opened the season—"Otello," "Il Trovatore," "Anna Bolena," and "Turandot"—satisfied that criterion, at least when it comes to female roles. For whatever reason, the kinds of soprano and mezzo voices suited for the Rossini-to-Puccini canon, whether of the nimble bel-canto or forceful spinto type, are thriving, and the Met engaged several leading practitioners in a concentrated period. Sonya Yoncheva and Jamie Barton sang in "Otello" and "Anna Bolena," respectively. Sondra Radvanovsky, in the title role of "Anna Bolena," began a season-long traversal of Donizetti's trio of Tudor queens. Christine Goerke, the Met's new star dramatic soprano, essayed her first staged Turandot. And Anna Netrebko, having ventured Lady Macbeth last season, moved on to Leonora in "Trovatore." (I saw "Anna Bolena" at its first performance, the others on their second nights.)

The news in advance of "Otello" was that the Met had made the welcome decision to abandon blackface makeup for the title role. Aleksandrs Antonenko sang that arduous part accurately and with contained fire, but the director didn't find another way to indicate why Otello might be a volatile outsider. Antonenko and Željko Lučić, the Iago, often seemed interchangeably grim. Yoncheva, a thirty-three-year-old Bulgarian, made a much deeper impression. I first heard her in 2010, when she appeared in Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas," under William Christie, at BAM. She struck me then as an intelligent, sensitive singer who held back from the primal sorrow of Dido's Lament. Either she has grown spectacularly or, more likely, I missed something. In just a few years, she has emerged as a major lyric soprano, and as Desdemona she succeeded in putting a decisive stamp on a character who is too often portrayed as a fleshless signifier of doomed innocence. This Desdemona is confident and passionate, so certain of her rectitude and so disbelieving of her husband's rage that she inadvertently provokes him. More or less on her own, Yoncheva generated



*For the first time at the Met, the role of Otello was performed without blackface. Aleksandrs Antonenko sang with contained fire.*





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the tragic tension on which the piece turns, although she had crucial support from Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Met orchestra. Nézet-Séguin, who is considered James Levine's heir apparent, has sometimes favored exactitude over excitement, but the formidable last hour of "Otello" suggested that he might be ready for the job.

Yoncheva is a charismatic actor, her face a transparent screen of emotion. Mainly, though, she creates character with the voice. Great Verdi singing is an art of transition, arising not from the immaculate execution of this or that aria but from an accretion of telling contrasts. Yoncheva's rendition of Desdemona's solo scene—the almost twenty-minute sequence, including the Willow Song and the Ave Maria, in which the character prepares to die—was a tour de force of nuance. At the outset, as Desdemona tells Emilia that Otello seems calmer, the voice had an eerie matter-of-factness. With the line "If I should die before you," there was an abrupt influx of feeling, in the Callas manner. Then, when Desdemona recalls her mother's maidservant, who sang of the willow, Yoncheva applied an original touch: an unadorned, vibrato-light sound, almost in Baroque style, suggesting movement back in time. Christie's influence was apparent in the minute vocal inflections: the word *salce*, or "willow," occurs more than a dozen times, and Yoncheva kept coloring it a little differently, as if it were a memento she was turning over in her hands. Other phrases were delivered with a dry, almost folksy flavor, or with melting legato, or with scooping sensuousness, or with chilly precision. The beginning of the Ave Maria evoked a tremulous adolescent. The most wrenching transition came in Desdemona's farewell to Emilia: first, a hollow, stifled "*Buona notte*"; then the immense descending phrase on "*Ah! Emilia, Emilia, addio!*" the initial A-sharp detonating in the air. Yoncheva lacks a huge tone, but sheer volume is not the only way to make four thousand people hang on every note.

As for Goerke, Radvanovsky, and Barton, all are commanding artists who in the Met's opening week could be found singing roles for which they are not perfectly suited. Turandot is a thankless part

that requires the soprano first to issue icy high notes over some of Puccini's most inventive music and then to enact a profound transformation over the inferior bombast concocted after Puccini's death by Franco Alfano. Goerke is at her best riding the turbulent psychological currents of Wagner and Strauss: Turandot's fairy-tale strangeness eluded her, although she came alive as the character became more human. Zeffirelli's 1987 production, a theme park of chinoiserie, raises the question of whether the Met, having set aside blackface, should reconsider inane Asian stereotypes.

"Anna Bolena," Donizetti's 1830 masterpiece, is a bel-canto score that looks ahead to Verdi. In a house as big as the Met, it is often cast with heavier, less idiomatic voices. So it was when Netrebko sang the title role, in 2011; plush lyric lines fared better than florid runs. Radvanovsky and Barton, too, never seemed fully at ease with the rapid-fire figuration, although both sang with stamina, intelligence, and style. Radvanovsky hit her peak late in the opera, when the doomed queen is outwardly stately and inwardly anguished; the ruddy, grainy quality of her voice assumed a painterly glow. Barton, who played Jane Seymour, is a once-in-a-generation talent who can sing Purcell and Wagner with equal authority. But agile music shortchanges her: you want to hear that luminous tone extend through the bar.

In "Trovatore," the women and the men both held their own. Netrebko has developed a voluptuous lower register that gave weight to her central arias; Dolora Zajick, as Azucena, retains thunderous force. Yonghoon Lee cut a romantic profile as Manrico and offered ardent, purposeful phrases. But the evening belonged to Dmitri Hvorostovsky, who, in June, revealed that he had a brain tumor and would undergo treatment this fall. He nonetheless elected to sing three performances as the Count di Luna. An unfailingly elegant lord of legato, Hvorostovsky here showed more bite and edge than usual, giving pained strength to his high G at the end of "*Il balen*." The troubled nobility of the character blended with the courage of the singer. Verdi's familiar old opera, receiving its six-hundred-and-thirty-ninth performance at the Met, became a matter of life and death. ♦

## THE PRICE IS RIGHT

*What advertising does to TV.*

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



Ever since the finale of “*Mad Men*,” I’ve been meditating on its audacious last image. Don Draper, sitting cross-legged and purring “Ommmm,” is achieving inner peace at an Esalen-like retreat. He’s as handsome as ever, in khakis and a crisp white shirt. A bell rings, and a grin widens across his face. Then, as if cutting to a sponsor, we move to the iconic Coke ad from 1971—a green hillside covered with a racially diverse chorus of young people, trilling, in harmony, “I’d like to teach the world to sing.” Don Draper, recently suicidal, has invented the world’s greatest ad. He’s *back*, baby.

The scene triggered a debate online.

From one perspective, the image looked cynical: the viewer is tricked into thinking that Draper has achieved Nirvana, only to be slapped with the source of his smile. It’s the grin of an adman who has figured out how to use enlightenment to peddle sugar water, co-opting the counterculture as a brand. Yet, from another angle, the scene looked idealistic. Draper has indeed had a spiritual revelation, one that he’s expressing in a beautiful way—through advertising, his great gift. The night the episode aired, it struck me as a dark joke. But, at a discussion a couple of days later, at the New York Public Library, Matthew Weiner, the show’s creator, told the novelist A. M. Homes that viewers

should see the hilltop ad as “very pure,” the product of “an enlightened state.” To regard it otherwise, he warned, was itself the symptom of a poisonous mind-set.

The question of how television fits together with advertising—and whether we should resist that relationship or embrace it—has haunted the medium since its origins. Advertising is TV’s original sin. When people called TV shows garbage, which they did all the time, until recently, commercialism was at the heart of the complaint. Even great TV could never be good art, because it was tainted by definition. It was there to sell.

That was the argument made by George W. S. Trow in this magazine, in a feverish manifesto called “In the Context of No Context.” That essay, which ran in 1980, became a sensation, as coruscating denunciations of modernity so often do. In television, “the trivial is raised up to power,” Trow wrote. “The powerful is lowered toward the trivial.” Driven by “demography”—that is, by the corrupting force of money and ratings—television treats those who consume it like sales targets, encouraging them to view themselves that way. In one of several sections titled “Celebrities,” he writes, “The most successful celebrities are products. Consider the real role in American life of Coca-Cola. Is any man as well-loved as this soft drink is?”

Much of Trow’s essay, which runs to more than a hundred pages, makes little sense. It is written in the style of oracular poetry, full of elegant repetitions, elegant repetitions that induce a hypnotic effect, elegant repetitions that suggest authority through their wonderful numbing rhythms, but which contain few facts. It’s elitism in the guise of hipness. It is more nostalgic than “*Mad Men*” ever was for the era when Wasp men in hats ran New York. It’s a screed against TV written at the medium’s low point—after the energy of the sitcoms of the seventies had faded but before the innovations of the nineties—and it paints TV fans as brainwashed dummies.

And yet there’s something in Trow’s manifesto that I find myself craving these days: that rude resistance to being sold to, the insistence that there is, after all, such a thing as selling out. Those of us who love TV have won the war. The best scripted shows are regarded as significant art—debated, revered, denounced. TV

*Product integration is a small part of advertising, but it has symbolic importance.*



showrunners are embraced as heroes and role models, even philosophers. At the same time, television's business model is in chaos, splintered and re-forming itself, struggling with its own history. Making television has always meant bending to the money—and TV history has taught us to be cool with any compromise. But sometimes we're knowing about things that we don't know much about at all.

Once upon a time, TV made sense, economically and structurally: a few dominant network shows ran weekly, with ads breaking them up, like choruses between verses. Then came pay cable, the VCR, the DVD, the DVR, and the Internet. At this point, the model seems to morph every six months. Oceanic flat screens give way to palm-size iPhones. A cheap writer-dominated medium absorbs pricey Hollywood directors. You can steal TV; you can buy TV; you can get it free. Netflix, a distributor, becomes a producer. On Amazon, customers vote for which pilots will survive. Shows cancelled by NBC jump to Yahoo, which used to be a failing search engine. The two most ambitious and original debut series this summer came not from HBO or AMC but from a pair of lightweight cable networks whose slogans might as well be "Please underestimate us": Lifetime, with "UnREAL," and USA Network, with "Mr. Robot." That there is a summer season at all is a new phenomenon. This fall, as the networks launch a bland slate of pilots, we know there are better options.

A couple of months ago, at a meeting

of the Television Critics Association, the C.E.O. of FX, John Landgraf, delivered a speech about "peak TV," in which he lamented the exponential rise in production: three hundred and seventy-one scripted shows last year, more than four hundred expected this year—a bubble, Landgraf said, that would surely deflate. He got some pushback: Why now, when the door had cracked open to more than white-guy antiheroes, was it "too much" for viewers? But just as worrisome was the second part of Landgraf's speech, in which he wondered how the industry could fund so much TV. What was the model, now that the pie had been sliced into slivers? When Landgraf took his job, in 2005, ad buys made up more than fifty per cent of FX's revenue, he said. Now that figure was thirty-two per cent. When ratings drop, ad rates drop, too, and when people fast-forward producers look for new forms of access: through apps, through data mining, through deals that shape the shows we see, both visibly and invisibly. Some of this involves the ancient art of product integration, by which sponsors buy the right to be part of the story: these are the ads that can't be fast-forwarded.

This is both a new crisis and an old one. When television began, it was a live medium. Replicating radio, it was not merely supported by admen; it was run by them. In TV's early years, there were no showrunners: the person with ultimate authority was the product representative, the guy from Lysol or Lucky Strike. Beneath that man (always a man) was a network exec. A layer down were

writers, who were fungible, nameless figures, with the exception of people like Paddy Chayefsky, machers who often retreated when they grew frustrated by the industry's censorious limits. The result was that TV writers developed a complex mix of pride and shame, a sense that they were hired hands, not artists. It was a working-class model of creativity. The shows might be funny or beautiful, but their creators would never own them.

Advertisements shaped everything about early television programs, including their length and structure, with clear acts to provide logical inlets for ads to appear. Initially, there were rules governing how many ads could run: the industry standard was six minutes per hour. (Today, on network, it's about fourteen minutes.) But this didn't include the vast amounts of product integration that were folded into the scripts. (Product placement, which involves props, was a given.) Viewers take for granted that this is native to the medium, but it's unique to the U.S.; in the United Kingdom, such deals were prohibited until 2011. Even then, they were barred from the BBC, banned for alcohol and junk food, and required to be visibly declared—a "P" must appear onscreen.

In "Brought to You By: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream," Lawrence R. Samuel describes early shows like NBC's "Coke Time," in which Eddie Fisher sipped the soda. On an episode of "I Love Lucy" called "The Diet," Lucy and Desi smoked Philip Morris cigarettes. On "The Flintstones," the sponsor Alka-Seltzer ruled that no character get a stomach ache, and that there be no derogatory presentations of doctors, dentists, or druggists. On "My Little Margie," Philip Morris reps struck the phrase "I'm real cool!" lest it be associated with their competitors Kool cigarettes. If you were a big name—like Jack Benny, whom Samuel calls "the king of integrated advertising"—"plugola" was par for the course. (Benny once mentioned Schwinn bikes, then looked directly into the camera and deadpanned, "Send three.") There were only a few exceptions, including Sid Caesar, who refused to tout brands on "Your Show of Shows."

Sponsors were a conservative force. They helped blacklist writers suspected of being Communists, and, for decades, banned plots about homosexuality and



*"Hub. In my memory he was a lot bigger."*

"miscegenation." In Jeff Kesseloff's oral history "The Box," from 1995, Bob Levine, of ABC, describes pitching Sammy Davis, Jr., in an all-black variety show: Young & Rubicam execs walked out, so the idea was dropped. This tight leash affected even that era's version of prestige TV. In "Brought to You By," Samuel lists topics deemed off limits as "politics, sex, adultery, unemployment, poverty, successful criminality and alcohol"—now the basic food groups of cable. In one notorious incident, the American Gas Association sponsored CBS's anthology series "Playhouse 90." When an episode called "Portrait of a Murderer" ended, it created an unfortunate juxtaposition: after the killer was executed, the show cut to an ad with the slogan "Nothing but gas does so many jobs so well." Spooked, American Gas took a closer look at an upcoming project, George Roy Hill's "Judgment at Nuremberg." The company objected to any mention of the gas chambers—and though the writers resisted, the admen won.

This sponsor-down model held until

the late fifties, around the time that the quiz-show scandals traumatized viewers: producers, in their quest to please ad reps, had cheated. Both economic pressures and the public mood contributed to increased creative control by networks, as the old one-sponsor model dissolved. But the precedent had been established: when people talked about TV, ratings and quality were existentially linked, the business and the art covered by critics as one thing. Or, as Trow put it, "What is loved is a hit. What is a hit is loved."

Kenya Barris's original concept for the ABC series "Black-ish," last year's smartest network-sitcom debut, was about a black writer in a TV writers' room. But then he made the lead role a copywriter at an ad agency, which allowed the network to cut a deal with Buick, so that the show's hero, Dre, is seen brainstorming ads for its car. In *Automotive News*, Buick's marketing manager, Molly Peck, said that the company worked closely with Barris. "We get the benefit of being part of the

program, so people are actually watching it as opposed to advertising where viewers often don't watch it."

Product integration is a small slice of the advertising budget, but it can take on outsized symbolic importance, as the watermark of a sponsor's power to alter the story—and it is often impossible to tell whether the mention is paid or not. "The Mindy Project" celebrates Tinder. An episode of "Modern Family" takes place on iPods and iPhones. On the ABC Family drama "The Fosters," one of the main characters, a vice-principal, talks eagerly about the tablets her school is buying. "Wow, it's so light!" she says, calling the product by its full name, the "Kindle Paperwhite e-reader," and listing its useful features. On last year's most charming debut drama, the CW's "Jane the Virgin," characters make trips to Target, carry Target bags, and prominently display the logo.

Those are shows on channels that are explicitly commercialized. But similar deals ripple through cable television and the new streaming producers. FX cut a

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deal with MillerCoors, so that every character who drinks or discusses a beer is drinking its brands. (MillerCoors designs retro bottles for “The Americans.”) According to *Ad Age*, Anheuser-Busch struck a deal with “House of Cards,” trading supplies of booze for onscreen appearances; purportedly, Samsung struck another, to be the show’s “tech of choice.” Unilever’s Choco Taco paid for integration on Comedy Central’s “Workaholics,” aiming to be “the dessert for millennials.” On NBC, Dan Harmon’s avant-garde comedy, “Community,” featured an anti-corporate plot about Subway paid for by Subway. When the show jumped to Yahoo, the episode “Advanced Safety Features” was about Honda. “It’s not there were just a couple of guys driving the car; it was the whole episode about Honda,” Tom Peyton, an assistant V.P. of marketing at Honda, told *Ad Week*. “You hold your breath as an advertiser, and I’m sure they did too—did you go too far and commercialize the whole thing and take it away from it?—but I think the opposite happened. . . . Huge positives.”

Whether that bothers you or impresses you may depend on whether you laughed and whether you noticed. There’s a common notion that there’s good and bad integration. The “bad” stuff is bump-tious—unfunny and in your face. “Good” integration is either invisible or ironic, and it’s done by people we trust, like Stephen Colbert or Tina Fey. But it brings out my inner George Trow. To my mind, the cleverer the integration, the more harmful it is. It’s a sedative designed to make viewers feel that there’s nothing to be angry about, to admire the ad inside the story, to train us to shrug off every compromise as necessary and normal.

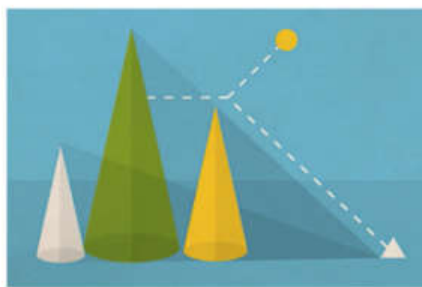
Self-mocking integration used to seem modern to me—the irony of a post-“Simpsons” generation—until I realized that it was actually nostalgic: Jack Benny did sketches in which he playfully “resisted” sponsors like Lucky Strike and Lipton tea. Alfred Hitchcock, on “Alfred Hitchcock Presents,” made snide remarks about Bristol-Myers. The audience had no idea that those wisecracks were scripted by a copywriter who had submitted them to Bristol-Myers for approval.

A few weeks ago, Stephen Colbert began hosting CBS’s “Late Show.” In his first show, he pointed to a “cursed” amulet. He was under the amulet’s con-

trol, Colbert moaned, and thus had been forced to “make certain”—he paused—“regrettable compromises.” Then he did a bit in which he slavered over Sabra hummus and Rold Gold pretzels. Some critics described the act as satire, but that’s a distinction without a difference. Colbert embraced “sponsortunities” when he was on Comedy Central, too, behind the mask of an ironic persona; it’s likely one factor that made him a desirable replacement for Letterman, the worst salesman on late-night TV.

During this summer of industry chaos, one TV show did make a pungent case against consumerism: “Mr. Robot,” on USA Network. A dystopian thriller with Occupy-inflected politics, the series was refreshing, both for its melancholy beauty and for its unusually direct attack on corporate manipulation. “Mr. Robot” was the creation of a TV newcomer, Sam Esmail, who found himself in an odd position: his anti-branding show was itself rebranding an aggressively corporate network, known for its “blue sky” procedurals—a division of NBCUniversal, a subsidiary of Comcast.

“Mr. Robot” tells the story of Elliott Alderson, corporate cog by day, hacker by night, a mentally unstable junkie who is part of an Anonymous-like collective that conspires to delete global debt. In one scene, Elliott fantasizes about being conventional enough for a girlfriend: “I’ll go see those stupid Marvel movies with her.



I’ll join a gym. I’ll heart things on Instagram.” He walks into his boss’s office with a Starbucks vanilla latte, the most basic of beverages. This sort of straightforwardly hostile namecheck is generally taboo, both to avoid offending potential sponsors and to leave doors open for their competitors. Esmail says he fought to get real brands in the story, citing “Mad Men” as precedent, as his phone calls with the network’s lawyers went from “weekly to daily.”

Were any of these mentions paid for?

Not in the first season—although Esmail says that he did pursue integrations with brands, some of which turned him down and some of which he turned down (including tech companies that demanded “awkward language” about their features). He’s open to these deals in Season 2. “If the idea is to inspire an interesting debate over capitalism, I actually think (depending on how we use it) it can help provoke that conversation even more,” he said. As long as such arrangements are “organic and not forced,” they’re fine with him—what’s crucial is not the money but the verisimilitude that brands provide. Only one major conflict came up, Esmail said, in the finale, when Elliott’s mysterious alter ego screams in the middle of Times Square, “I’m no less real than the fucking meat patty in your Big Mac.” Esmail and USA agreed to bleep “Big Mac”—“to be sensitive to ad sales,” Esmail told me—but they left it in for online airings. Esmail said he’s confident that the network fought for him. “Maybe Comcast has a relationship with McDonald’s?” he mused. (USA told me that the reason was “standards and practices.”)

“Are you asking me how I feel about product integration?” Matt Weiner said. “I’m for it.” Everything on TV is an ad for something, he pointed out, down to Jon Hamm’s beautifully pomaded hair—and he argued that a paid integration is far less harmful than other propaganda embedded in television, such as how cop shows celebrate the virtues of the state. We all have our sponsors. Michelangelo painted for the Pope! What’s dangerous about modern TV isn’t advertisers, Weiner told me; it’s creatives not getting enough of a cut of the proceeds.

Weiner used to work in network television, in a more restrictive creative environment, until he got his break, on “The Sopranos.” Stepping into HBO’s subscription-only chamber meant being part of a prestige brand: no ads, that gorgeous hissing logo, critical bennies. The move to AMC, then a minor cable station, was a challenge. Weiner longed for the most elegant model, with one sponsor—the approach of “Playhouse 90.” But getting ads took hustle, even in a show about them. Weiner’s description of the experience of writing integrations is full of cognitive dissonance. On the

one hand, he said, wistfully, he didn't realize at first that he could say no to integrations. Yet he was frustrated by the ones he couldn't get, like attaching Revlon to Peggy's "Basket of Kisses" plot about lipstick. Such deals were valuable—"money you don't leave on the floor"—but it was crucial that the audience not know about them, and that there be few.

The first integration on "Mad Men," for Jack Daniel's, was procured before Weiner got involved; writing it into the script made him feel "icky." (Draper wouldn't drink Jack Daniel's, Weiner told me.) Pond's cold cream was a more successful fit. But he tried to impose rules: the sponsor could see only the pages its brand was on; dialogue would mention competitors; and, most important, the company couldn't run ads the night its episode was on the air. Unilever cheated, Weiner claimed—and AMC allowed it. The company filmed ads mimicking the "Mad Men" aesthetic, making the tie with the show visible. If viewers knew that Pond's was integrated, they wouldn't lose themselves in the story, Weiner worried.

In the end, he says, he did only three—Heineken was the third (an integration procured after Michelob backed out). I naively remarked that Jaguar couldn't have paid: who would want to be the brand of sexual coercion? "You'd be surprised," he said. Jaguar didn't buy a plug, but the company loved the plot—and hired Christina Hendricks to flack the car, wearing a bright-red pantsuit.

Weiner had spent the Television Critics Association convention talking up "Mr. Robot" and he told me that he was "stunned" by Esmail's show, which he called American TV's "first truly contemporary anti-corporate message." Then again, he said, "show business in general has been very good at co-opting the people that bite the hands that feed them." NBC-Universal was wise to buy into Esmail's radical themes, he said, because these are ideas that the audience is ready for—"even the Tea Party knows we don't want to give the country over to corporations."

Weiner made clear that Coke hadn't paid for any integration; he mentioned it a few times. Finally, I asked, Why not? "Mad Men" ended in a way that both Coke and viewers could admire. Why not take the money? Two reasons, he said. First, Coca-Cola could "get excited and start making demands." But, really,

he didn't want to "disturb the purity of treating that ad as what it was." Weiner is proud that "Mad Men" had a lasting legacy, influencing how viewers saw television's potential, how they thought about money and power, creativity and the nature of work. He didn't want them to think that Coke had bought his finale.

There is no art form that doesn't run a three-legged race with the sponsors that support its production, and the weaker an industry gets (journalism, this means you; music, too) the more ethical resistance flags. But readers would be grossed out to hear that Karl Ove Knausgaard had accepted a bribe to put the Talking Heads into his childhood memories. They'd be angry if Stephen Sondheim slipped a Dewar's jingle into "Company." That's not priggishness or elitism. It's a belief that art is powerful, that storytelling is real, that when we immerse ourselves in that way it's a vulnerable act of trust. Why wouldn't this be true for television, too?

Viewers have little control over how any show gets made; TV writers and directors have only a bit more—their roles mingle creativity and management in a way that's designed to create confusion. Even the experts lack expertise, these days. But I wonder if there's a way for us to be less comfortable as consumers, to imagine ourselves as the partners not of the advertisers but of the artists—to crave purity, naïve as that may sound. I miss "Mad Men," that nostalgic meditation on nostalgia. But embedded in its vision was the notion that television writing and copywriting are and should be mirrors, twins. Our comfort with being sold to may look like savvy, but it feels like innocence. There's something to be said for the emotions that Trow tapped into, disgust and outrage and betrayal—emotions that can be embarrassing but are useful when we're faced with something ugly.

Perhaps this makes me sound like a drunken twenty-two-year-old waving a battered copy of Naomi Klein's "No Logo." But that's what happens when you love an art form. In my imagination, television would be capable of anything. It could offend anyone; it could violate any rule. For it to get there, we might have to expect of it what we expect of any art. ♦

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# THE TIME OF BROKEN WINDOWS

*New York from punk to Trump.*

BY LOUIS MENAND



*Crosby Street, SoHo, in 1978.*

To cut unceremoniously to the chase, yes, as you might suspect, or fear, Garth Risk Hallberg's new, much promoted, nine-hundred-and-forty-four-page novel, "City on Fire" (Knopf), is about four hundred pages too long. Hallberg is a gifted writer, so the pages go by pleasurably. His book is never flaccid or flat, but it does not leave you wishing for more. He tried to squeeze too much juice out of the apple.

"City on Fire" is basically a detective story, from a recipe that goes back to Dickens: an apparently random event—in this case, the shooting of a punky N.Y.U. student named Samantha in Central Park on New Year's Eve—turns out to be a thread that, when pulled, unravels a web of intrigue that stretches from a midtown office tower to an abandoned building in the East Village. The novel features a dozen or so characters from varied walks of New York life—a cop, a reporter, a schoolteacher, a punk rocker, a fireworks-maker, an assistant in a gal-

lery, an investment banker, and so on. As the secrets are revealed, each of them turns out to be one degree of separation or less from the others.

It's all highly implausible, of course. Contrary to what newcomers to the city may imagine, New York is a place where circles almost never intersect, except transactionally—at co-op meetings and parent-teacher conferences, or on jury duty. New Yorkers circulate mostly within their own class and occupational orbits. Manhattan is a hundred small towns unevenly distributed over some twenty-two square miles of city space.

But the genre that "City on Fire" belongs to requires a suspension of disbelief on this point. Implausibility is part of the design. The plots of Dickens's big "condition of England" novels are implausible in the same way. In the London of "Bleak House," a connection between Lady Dedlock and Jo the street-sweeper didn't have even a transactional basis. The aim of these novels is not to

mimic actual city life, where people tend to be like hamsters in their own cages. It's to dramatize a hidden interdependence, to show that we are all, each according to our abilities, turning the same big socioeconomic wheel inside the same spatiotemporal cage.

The spatiotemporal cage in "City on Fire" is New York in the nineteen-seventies. The main action takes us from Christmas, 1976, to July 13, 1977, the night of the New York City blackout. (The night, to be precise, of the second New York City blackout; the first was in 1965. A third blackout happened in 2003.) The book opens with a bang. The setup, introducing the main characters and ending with the shooting and the start of the police investigation, is expertly handled on every level: characterization, setting, pace, suspense. It takes up only a hundred and thirty-one pages.

Then the backstories start. There are also flash-forwards, plus several "interludes," consisting of documents printed in a variety of fonts (a New Wave zine, the typescript of a magazine piece, an artist's notebook). In all, the novel has six of these interludes, ninety-four chapters, a prologue, and a postscript. Relationships get reshuffled and a lot of family history accumulates, but the book has just the one plot. The style is naturalistic—no Pynchonian flights of fancy—with some bravura passages (inside the mind of someone on heroin, for instance) and bits of life wisdom appropriate to the characters' personalities and perspectives.

It's rude to speculate about an author's motives, so let's just say it's *as though* Hallberg had had an idea for a great, "Chinatown"-like whodunit about New York but felt some sort of ethical or professional duty to turn the book into an art novel. (In fact, although "City on Fire" is being advertised as Hallberg's first novel, he has published an art novel, "A Field Guide to the North American Family," a cross-indexed mixture of prose and photographs.) Hallberg has the talent to bring a character to life in a few pages, and that's really all he needs for the purposes of his plot. The backstories and the rest iterate more than they complicate.

Another reason for the length is an overreliance on the technique known as free indirect style—the focalization of the narrative through the mind and voice of a character. It's a great device

for representing experience from the inside, but it carves the world into a series of perspectives. Here is the first paragraph of the first chapter:

A Christmas tree was coming up Eleventh Avenue. Or rather, was trying to come; having tangled itself in a shopping cart someone had abandoned in the crosswalk, it shuddered and bristled and heaved, on the verge of bursting into flame. Or so it seemed to Mercer Goodman as he struggled to salvage the tree's crown from the battered mesh of the cart. Everything these days was on the verge. Across the street, char-marks marred the loading dock where local bedlamites built fires at night. The hookers who sunned themselves there by day were watching now through dime-store shades, and for a second Mercer was acutely aware of how he must appear: a corduroyed and bespectacled brother doing his best to backpedal, while at the far end of the tree, a bedheaded whiteboy in a motorcycle jacket tried to yank the trunk forward and to hell with the shopping cart. Then the signal switched from DON'T WALK to WALK, and miraculously, through some combination of push-me and pull-you, they were free again.

It's a nicely crafted curtain-raiser. It signals a time (the de-institutionalized homeless—the “bedlamites”—began showing up on the streets in 1965; the WALK/DON'T WALK signs got phased out starting in 2000) and a place (Eleventh Avenue loading docks plus prostitutes equals Hell's Kitchen), and it introduces two major characters. Mercer is a nerdy African-American from Georgia who teaches in a private school for girls in the Village, loves nineteenth-century novels like “Lost Illusions” and “The Red and the Black,” and is trying to write a novel of his own (not, as it turns out, this one). His boyfriend, William, is the estranged scion of a banking family, an ex-punk-band leader, public-restroom cruiser, and heroin addict. He is trying to finish a painting.

But the “lens” on the encounter in a crosswalk between a Christmas tree and an empty shopping cart (a tidy image of economic dissonance) is Mercer. Everything in the scene is as he sees it and thinks it. “Bedlamite,” an obsolete Britishism, is there because it's a word that a literary guy like Mercer would know. Even the description of Mercer is Mercer's description. Every chapter is in this mode. We get the picture from one point of view at a time. There are few wide-angle shots. The story is assembled in slices.

Hallberg has an M.F.A. from N.Y.U.

and lives in New York, but he was born in Louisiana, grew up in North Carolina, went to college in Missouri, and was not alive in the nineteen-seventies. To a person who did live in New York in the nineteen-seventies—to wit, this person—his powers of evocation are uncanny. Hell's Kitchen, the Bowery, Central Park West, the subway, the L.I.R.R.—it's as though he'd once walked those streets, ridden those cars.

He acknowledges the help of several books on New York, including Ken Auletta's classic “The Streets Were Paved with Gold,” published in 1979, and Jonathan Mahler's more recent “Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bronx Is Burning.” Slips are minimal. (The tag of the pioneer graffiti artist Taki was Taki 183, not Taki 8, for instance.) But “City on Fire” is not overstuffed with period detail. It's not that kind of historical novel.

There is virtually no mention of the Yankees, for instance, although they won the World Series in 1977, under the guidance of the thin-skinned sourball Billy Martin, or the campaign for mayor, at the end of which, to the dismay of liberals, Ed Koch defeated Mario Cuomo. Son of Sam, then known as “the .44-calibre killer,” is not in the book, although he killed five people between January and July, 1977, and was finally captured that August.

It's not the facts that bring the nineteen-seventies to life in “City on Fire.” What Hallberg is after is an atmosphere, and he gets it. He gets the assaultive feeling the city had in those bombed-out years. He gets the ubiquitous defacement of public surfaces, the shuttered shops and derelict street people, the soul-destroying round-the-clock noise. His New York is a city that never sleeps not because there's always more fun to be had but because it has insomnia.

But he is (like Dickens) a romantic about human nature. “City of Fire” will probably be compared with Tom Wolfe's big, class-intersecting novel about New York in the nineteen-eighties, “The Bonfire of the Vanities.” You read it here first that this would be a mistake. “The Bonfire of the Vanities,” as the allusion to Thackeray tells us, is a satire. “City on Fire” is not remotely satirical. The good guys are truly good, or, at least, they have honorable intentions and suffer

remorse when they fall short. The few characters who are without a conscience had tough childhoods. The system is not to blame, it seems, nor is human folly. It's just that some people manage to transcend their family mess (every family in the novel is some sort of mess), and some can't, in which case they might deal with their pain by doing bad things, like burning down the South Bronx.

Hallberg is also a romantic about the nineteen-seventies. That may seem a strange species of nostalgia. The decade between 1972 and 1982 was the worst extended economic period since the nineteen-thirties. There were two oil crises, the first in 1973, when the price of a barrel nearly quadrupled, and the second in 1978-79, when it tripled. The stock market crashed in grim slow motion. Between 1972 and 1974, the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost almost half its value, and the market did not get back to 1972 levels until 1982. In 1975, unemployment jumped to 8.5 per cent. The inflation rate exceeded ten per cent. By late 1980, the year Ronald Reagan was elected President, the prime rate was twenty per cent.

In New York, it was the same only worse. From 1970 to 1976, the city lost more than six hundred thousand jobs. By 1976, unemployment stood at eleven per cent, and one in every seven New Yorkers was on welfare. The city was broke and had to be bailed out. “FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD” was the famous *Daily News* headline, but Ford did not in fact say those words, and Congress eventually provided the financial assistance the city needed to climb back out of the red.

The price for that aid was austerity measures, and the reduction in city services, as well as poor decisions about things like the allocation of firehouses, led to areas of the city, like the Lower East Side and the South Bronx, becoming wastelands of drugs, abandoned buildings, muggings, robberies, and arson. Signs of blight were everywhere, a kind of urban eczema.

New York felt empty—there were so many parts of it where people didn't want to go—and out of control. It was the time of broken windows. But, in part because of the collapse, the city also felt open, liberated, available. Anything seemed possible, especially to people



who didn't have much to begin with—avant-garde artists and performers, New Wave musicians, experimental writers, advanced students of the society of the spectacle. It wasn't quite Saint-Germain-des-Prés after 1945 or Berlin after 1989, but Manhattan in the nineteen-seventies had a kind of locally grown cultural magnetism.

The piece of the downtown subculture that Hallberg takes on is the music scene. It was centered on two clubs, C.B.G.B., at Bowery and Bleecker, and the renovated Max's Kansas City, on Park Avenue South. Those clubs were where groups like the Ramones, Television, and Blondie—groups at first known only by word of mouth—performed. It cost a dollar to see the Ramones at C.B.G.B. (You had to pay for drinks.)

The main downtown characters in "City on Fire" are the members of a punk band called Ex Nihilo and assorted hangers-on. The most successful of these is Charlie, a geeky Long Island teen-ager who is making the difficult taste transition from David Bowie to Patti Smith. To the extent that "City on Fire" is a novel of education, like the nineteenth-century novels that Mercer is obsessed with, Charlie is the hero. As a detective story, though, the book has two main actors: the leader of Ex Nihilo, who uses the stage name Nicky Chaos, and his uptown counter-

part, Amory Gould, a businessman who has a scheme to make money from urban blight and might require a little surreptitious help with the blight part.

Nicky is a practitioner of the Situationist art of negation. He is a firebug who collects Herb Alpert records and talks about Marx and Nietzsche. He describes himself as a "post-Humanist," and says things like "Choice isn't the same thing as freedom—not when someone is framing the choices for you," and, "This is the '70s now, the death trip, the destruction trip, the internal contradictions rumbling and grumbling, the return of the repressed. It's the system, having swallowed everything, having indigestion."

He also says, "No more art. No more trying to change the culture with culture." He's a revolutionary who thinks that people won't rise up unless their lives get materially worse. Underlying his arrangement with Amory is a bet over whether increasing the blight will bring on class warfare or simply hasten redevelopment.

The climax of the novel is set during the blackout. July 13, 1977, was a very hot day. At 8:37 P.M., during a thunderstorm, power lines in Westchester carrying electricity to the city's grid were hit by lightning. Con Ed was unprepared to cope with the demand,

there were more lightning strikes and a chain reaction, and by 9:36 P.M. all five boroughs (except for portions of Queens) and a few northern suburbs were without electricity.

The looting and arson began almost immediately. It was twenty-five hours before power was restored, and by then a thousand serious fires had broken out, more than fifteen hundred businesses had been looted or set on fire, and thirty-seven hundred people had been arrested. Rioters did not touch upscale businesses on the Upper East Side or, for the most part, in midtown. They looted and burned the mom-and-pop stores and bodegas in their own neighborhoods. About half of those arrested were unemployed, but this meant that about half were not. It was a frenzy of self-destruction.

Hallberg's blackout is a (hundred-and-twenty-page) Walpurgisnacht of rage, craziness, and anarchy, but he also treats it as one of those suspensions of the conditions of ordinary life that allow things, under cover of chaos, to sort themselves out. By the next day, the mystery of the shooting has been solved and the web of intrigue revealed, and the dozen or so characters, having been brought together, now begin to separate, off to fresh treadmills in cages new.

The rioting killed any Situationist dreams of a new Commune. As the writer Luc Sante, then a graduate student living on the Lower East Side, later put it, "The looters were exemplary Americans, whose immediate impulse in a crisis was to see to the acquisition of consumable goods. They had no interest in power. Neither did anyone I knew. We just wanted power to go away." The blackout did not kill the arts scene, though. The damaging blow came in 1981, at the very end of that rough decade, with the first signs of the AIDS epidemic.

It may strike some readers as a little odd to find that the novel's sympathies seem to lie, ultimately, with the uptown businesspeople, and not with the punks. Amory was right: the recession may have driven many middle-class families out of the city, but it was a great business opportunity. One cause of the arson was landlords choosing to burn their buildings for the insurance. This meant that there was plenty of distressed property, all over



*"Do we have to use our inside voices through clenched teeth, like you, Ms. Baker?"*

the city, for bold speculators to snap up.

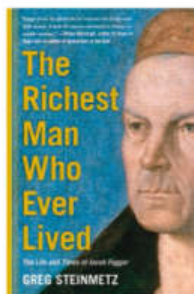
That's how Donald Trump got his start. In 1974, when he was twenty-eight and had never built a thing in Manhattan, he set out to acquire property owned by the bankrupt Penn Central railroad. One of those pieces was the Grand Commodore Hotel, on Forty-second Street, next to Grand Central. According to Trump's account, in his first book, "The Art of the Deal" (required reading for those of us preparing for a Trump Presidency), he got the city to agree to let him pay taxes on the property based on its assessed value in 1975. Trump renovated the hotel, and, in 1980, it reopened as the Grand Hyatt. The tax abatement was good for forty years, and is estimated to have been worth sixty million dollars in its first decade.

A great number of the jobs lost between 1970 and 1976 were manufacturing jobs. The city was going through a painful and inadequately planned-for transition from an economy based on manufacturing to one based on financial services. It needed the markets to recover, but, when they did, all the amenities of urban professional life recovered with them. Gentrification drove the S.R.O.s out and real-estate values up. The old Times Square, a squalid realm of peep shows and B movies, was turned into Disney World Manhattan.

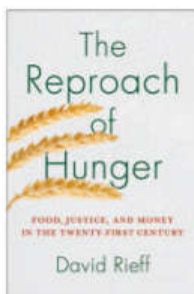
Upscale New Yorkers today may complain about the gentrification and the commodification and the tourists. But not many of those people would have lasted long in the city of 1975. They would have found it so *unhealthy*. People smoked in restaurants and did not clean up after their dogs. Forget about cell phones and Wi-Fi; most people didn't even have cable. If you parked your car on the street, someone would steal the radio. There were no espresso bars in the nineteen-seventies, no Mario Batali or David Chang or Dan Barber. There was Chock full o' Nuts, and people ate in places like Lüchow's and Mama Leone's, huge barns of fat and cholesterol. Gyms were for pumping iron, not for doing Pilates. No one had ever heard of Pilates.

It was another era, remote not just in time but in spirit, and now that we know how it all came out it's nice to have a book that brings a little of it back. You can always close a book. ♦

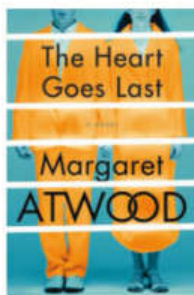
## BRIEFLY NOTED



**THE RICHEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED**, by Greg Steinmetz (*Simon & Schuster*). In 1515, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I had a problem: two of his grandchildren were marrying two children of King Ladislaus of Hungary, but he didn't have the money to pay for the party. He borrowed it from Jacob Fugger, the banker he also turned to for financing many of his military campaigns. Steinmetz lays out the fascinating story of a man who shaped modern business practices and the borders of Europe. Fugger, the child of cloth merchants, amassed a fortune worth two per cent of Europe's G.D.P., along with corresponding political influence. The double wedding was contracted, Steinmetz writes, largely to protect Fugger's copper-mining interests.



**THE REPROACH OF HUNGER**, by David Rieff (*Simon & Schuster*). This study of global hunger explores both the "business-dominated development world," which Rieff finds oblivious of hunger's ideological dimension, and anti-globalist movements for food sovereignty, which he sympathizes with but sees little future for. Hunger, he writes, is a political problem, and fighting it means rejecting the fashionable consensus that only the private sector can act efficiently. Rieff is attuned to the danger of moralism and emphasizes that he doesn't doubt Bill Gates's sincerity, even while criticizing his foundation as "irreducibly undemocratic." Even sympathetic billionaires tend to miss "those essential elements of twenty-first-century capitalism that make philanthrocapitalism not a dream but a mystification."



**THE HEART GOES LAST**, by Margaret Atwood (*Nan A. Talese*). This dystopian novel follows Charmaine and Stan, a desperate and unsuspecting couple who, in the wake of mass homelessness and unemployment, join a new residential community, Consilience. For every month of steady income and comfortable living in Consilience, tenants spend an alternate month in Positron Prison, performing tasks for the good of their micro-society. Charmaine's affair with a fellow-inhabitant soon challenges the motives and the rosy rhetoric of Consilience's leaders, revealing a sinister scheme that endangers Stan's life. Atwood's narrative sometimes seems overstuffed, but the novel affords an arresting perspective on the confluence of information, freedom, and security in the modern age.



**EVERLAND**, by Rebecca Hunt (*Europa*). In 1913, three explorers are dispatched to chart the Antarctic island of Everland, with disastrous results; in 2013, a trio of researchers attempts to repeat the expedition. Polar calamity ensues. This novel recalls Andrea Barrett's stories of scientific camaraderie, but carries its knowledge less easily, with characters who tend to speak in technical exposition. Sometimes, though, Hunt achieves a neat, desolate poetry—a glacier is "a crumpled stole," the cold "an encompassing, unsolvable misery." As the two narratives draw together, Hunt makes much of uncanny conjunctions: injuries, obsessions, and personality traits echo across a century and produce a harrowing story about the timelessness of ambition and human frailty.



# RADIO NOISE

*Elevator Repair Service follows a not-so-new script.*

BY HILTON ALS



In July, I went up to Bard College to catch a performance of “Oklahoma!,” directed by Daniel Fish, whose 2012 production “A (radically condensed and expanded) Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again (after David Foster Wallace)” had met with critical acclaim. I wanted to see what Rodgers and Hammerstein’s legendary 1943 work would look like through the eyes of a director who had little, if any, direct relationship to the vanished America that produced it. The forty-eight-year-old Fish declared his production’s difference from the start. He had converted the theatre into a kind of barn: long wooden tables flanked the stage, bearing corn bread and drinks; gun racks hung from a wall; and when the performers moved they did so naturally,

without the usual staginess of musical choreography. The show was, on the whole, very well cast. And yet I walked away feeling discouraged by the production’s “experimental” tropes. Like Jay Scheib, Benedict Andrews, and other theatre-makers of his generation, Fish used video to shift the audience’s relationship to the actors, providing a closeup view of their reactions and intimacies. But the device, instead of offering a new perspective on the action, simply underscored the limitations of theatre next to nearly every other, faster-moving form of presentation. Technology plays a big part in our lives, of course, and there’s no reason to excise it from the real life of the stage, but New York’s avant-garde the-

atre is so inundated with video, sound effects, deconstructed texts, and other gimmicks that it has become mired in its own self-consciousness. The fact that Elevator Repair Service, one of the more adventuresome troupes around, has greased the engine of its new spectacle, “Fondly, Collette Richland” (at New York Theatre Workshop), with the same oil feels like yet another letdown.

A few years ago, John Collins, who founded Elevator Repair Service in 1991 and is its artistic director, had a big success with “Gatz,” a show in which an actor read aloud the entire text of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby” while drab office workers dramatized the story around him. The company also put on fascinating pieces based on William Faulkner’s “The Sound and the Fury” and Ernest Hemingway’s “The Sun Also Rises.” What unified these and other Elevator Repair Service productions was Collins’s pursuit of the physicalization of language: he’s less interested in stories that move in synch with words, like most traditional theatre, than in how bodies travelling through space at odd or unpredictable angles can make us hear and experience language differently.

In 2013, Collins presented “Arguendo,” at the Public. The script, based on *Barnes v. Glen Theatre*, a 1991 Supreme Court case in which a group of Indiana-based dancers fought for the right to perform nude, was drawn from interviews, transcripts, and other archival materials, which, rather than lending veracity to the enterprise, pointed to its paucity of invention. Dull and strained, “Arguendo” felt like a transitional work—of little importance, I thought, except as a bridge from the company’s “classic novel” phase to something else. But when artists are in trouble they’re liable to do strange things. “Fondly, Collette Richland” has an original script (albeit one that draws on Jane Bowles’s writing), by Sibyl Kempson, but the staging, which is riddled with familiar stylistic tricks, leads me to the conclusion that Elevator Repair Service, like many avant-garde companies, has hit a brick wall.

There are a lot of walls in “Fondly, Collette Richland”—or, more accurately, screens, no doubt Jean Genet-inspired, which stand in for the walls of an American home and a hotel in the Alps, where much of the play is set. At first, though,

*Sibyl Kempson takes on storytelling and stereotypes in “Fondly, Collette Richland.”*

we find ourselves in an unidentified space dominated by Collette Richland (April Matthis). Collette speaks in the measured, nasal tones of a prewar radio personality. Indeed, she loves radio—loves storytelling—and how it used to bring people together. To her right sits Father Mumbles (Mike Iveson), who plays some piano tunes after Collette speaks in her elegiac way. This brief prologue has its charms. But then the lights dim and we're at the home of Mabrel and "Fritz" Fitzhubert (Laurena Allan and Vin Knight). As the couple sit down to dinner, a man called Local Representative Wheatsun (Greig Sargeant) appears at their door. Mabrel is happy to invite him in; what she doesn't want—she's the opposite of Collette—is any storytelling. "Please keep in mind that we will prefer to have no dramatic action this evening," she tells him. "We wish only to enjoy a quiet supper together." Mabrel's wish for no drama is, of course, an ironic comment on what is about to happen and what Collette wants: for us all to gather around that lovely communal fire, bright with tales.

Collins likes to make stage pictures that begin flat, then build, explode, and recede, like a party gone drunkenly wrong. Kempson gives him the opportunity to do that here, and this is when the problems start. Mabrel and "Fritz" have a cat named Cat-Self-Hating Cat Butler (Susie Sokol, cast in a "freaky" comedic part, as usual), who does some bits that are meant to be funny—spitting up a hairball and so on—while the couple engage the Representative in a conversation that mimics the astonishing dialogue in Jane Bowles's stories and her unfinished play, "At the Jumping Bean":

"FRITZ": Mabrel has big dreams.

REPRESENTATIVE: Oh, mm hm . . .

MABREL: Yes, it's true. What my husband says is true. It's very, very true, Representative Wheatsun. . . . My life here with "Fritz" is stationary and conclusive. It is not a path. . . . And so I remain held fast to him, in spite of the icy winds within.

Kempson seems to want to write the plays that Bowles never got to. In her script, she occupies two (if not more) identities: she's the "author," who imagines being another author—Bowles.

When Mabrel's sister, Winnif'd Bexell (Kate Benson), enters and begins to interrogate the Representative, we're amused, briefly, until we realize that we

feel less than we should for Winnif'd (or for Mabrel and the other characters). And that's because Kempson has adopted Bowles's interest in stereotypes: again and again in Bowles's work, people try to understand others by reducing them to types. But what Kempson can't quite get a handle on is how Bowles filled in those outlines by allowing her characters to explain themselves in their indelible and mysterious individual ways. That was her genius. In the end, Kempson's imitation feels clamorous and hollow, especially when you consider how calmly yet hilariously Bowles rendered her fantastic and fanatical worlds: she didn't manufacture her characters' internal disorder so much as have them live it. Kempson is an artist, too, and she has a soul—you can't love Bowles the way she does without one—but her anarchism feels contrived and academic, whereas Bowles's just *was*. Kempson keeps tripping herself up with her ideas about the play—or what makes a play—and, in the process, she reduces her love for Bowles to a set of games and propositions and drains whatever feeling we should have for the characters, including that ridiculous cat.

Collins may love Bowles, too, but he has a more pressing problem to contend with: Elizabeth LeCompte, the director of the Wooster Group, where Collins was a sound designer from 1993 to 2007. LeCompte is the glorious monster that many theatre artists of Collins's age and disposition feel they have to slay in order to get ahead. But they never quite manage it, because they can't do what LeCompte did, which was to remake theatre out of what she *didn't* know—from the first, LeCompte worked from a place of innocence and imagination. By plundering LeCompte's gifts—her sense of structure, her ability to make dance and sound cohere into entertainment and idea—but rendering them less anarchic, safer, Collins frustrates his own talents. He doesn't quite know what to do with Kempson's erudition, so he trivializes it by turning much of what she's up to into a slow, grinding gag, while showcasing his own "invention." In the end, Collins and Kempson are not well served by their prominent position in New York's fashionable avant-garde. To make real art, they will have to forget what they know and work in a new, *avant la lettre* space. ♦



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## FORWARD DRIVE

*"The Martian" and "Taxi."*

BY ANTHONY LANE

Poor Matt Damon. Nobody wants to be friends with him. Last year, in "Interstellar," he played an astronaut named Mann, who was sent through a wormhole and ended up alone, on a frozen planet. This year, in "The Martian," he plays an astronaut named Mark Watney, who is marooned in a pelting storm and left behind, alone,

ing off at a perilous angle. Watney is abandoned, presumed dead. All this happens fast, at the outset of the movie—so fast, indeed, that it's the only section that feels rushed. We scarcely have a chance to get our bearings before they are thrown out of whack, and we see very little of Watney before he wakes up in the desert, on a nice bright Mar-



*Matt Damon is stranded on Mars in a new movie directed by Ridley Scott.*

on the red planet. The difference is that Mann was cunning and resentful, prepared to cause havoc in his desperation to escape, whereas Watney is cunning and resourceful—not a blamer, or a soul in meltdown, but a model of cockiness and grit as he sets about the business of survival.

Watney is part of Ares III, a NASA mission to Mars, captained by the phlegmatic Lewis (Jessica Chastain), who floats around her ship like a zero-gravity mermaid. The rest of the crew comprises Martinez (Michael Peña), Johanssen (Kate Mara), Vogel (Aksel Hennie), and Beck (Sebastian Stan). Having landed on the planet, and settled into base camp, they last eighteen days before the storm blows in and forces them to abort, blast-

tian day, with a length of broken radar antenna sticking out of his gut. No matter. From here on, we have all the time in the world. And he has four years to kill, on *his* world, before anyone can swing by to pick him up.

But how do you dramatize a waiting game? Given the threat of tedium, and the stony desolation of the backdrop, some viewers will be bracing themselves for Beckett in space, with the added twist that Godot could burn up on reentry. Do not fret. The director is Ridley Scott, who, as if taking a cue from his hero, rejoices in the challenge of solitude. He cuts between the cameras mounted inside the base, which show Watney toiling away (plus, in a worrying side panel, the pressure, temperature, and oxygen

levels). There is also a video diary, to which Watney confides his schemes and ruminations, all of which scorn the existential in favor of the pragmatic. He is the mission botanist, ideally placed to raise crops with which to feed himself. "Mars will come to fear my botany powers," he declares, before gathering the dried excrement of his colleagues. Plug your nostrils, add soil, sow seeds, hang around, and—hey presto—potatoes. If there *is* water on Mars, nobody told Watney, so he has to brew his own. In short, when he announced, early in his predicament, "I'm going to have to science the shit out of this," he wasn't kidding.

Ridley Scott is seventy-seven years old, yet the startling fact is that "The Martian" appears to be the work of a young man. When Watney, having made contact with Earth, states that he is "really looking forward to not dying," he speaks for the whole production, which thrums with an appetite for life. It can't get enough of the right stuff. There are plenty of scenes back at NASA, where the bigwigs—played by good-humored actors like Jeff Daniels, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Kristen Wiig—struggle to keep up with Watney's progress, and where even a simple press conference is framed and edited to keep the tone sprightly and deft. Much of Scott's output in the past decade, from "Kingdom of Heaven" (2005) to "Exodus: Gods and Kings" (2014), resounded with a heavy tread, whereas the new film, based on a novel by Andy Weir, is so light on its feet that anybody listening at the door of the theatre might think that there was a comedy playing inside. Again and again, chances for portentousness arise and get batted aside. When the folks on Ares III, still journeying home, learn that their friend is alive, and that lines of communication are open, Martinez sends him an e-mail: "Sorry we left you on Mars, but we just don't like you." He knows that Watney will get a kick out of that, and behind the joshing is the unspoken promise that, come what may, the crew will move heaven and earth to get him back.

It is thirty-six years since Scott made "Alien," and the true companion piece to that great film is not "Prometheus"—the gloomy, beautiful, and oddly superfluous prequel that he directed in 2012—but "The Martian." Sigourney Weaver

and Matt Damon are cut from similar cloth. True, the first is faced by a beast with acid for blood, while the second solemnly reveals that “it has been seven days since I ran out of ketchup,” but both are loners by force of circumstance and copers by instinct. In a recent interview, Scott described “Robinson Crusoe” as “one of my favorite books as a kid” and its hero as “the first astronaut,” and the new film tunes in to that old fixation. So does its leading man. Damon has never seemed more at home than he does here, millions of miles adrift. Would any other actor have shouldered the weight of the role with such diligent grace? He is our most unstarred star, no longer needing to hunt for our good will. Someone like Tom Cruise is too acutely conscious of his image to convince as a regular Joe, and Christian Bale too remote, whereas Damon, like Crusoe, feels stranded on our behalf, tasked with digging up the best of himself. Hence the first, grainy picture of Watney that is patched through to NASA; he may be Lazarus, come from the dead, but he poses in his spacesuit, thumbs way up, as the Fonz. Terrible place, Mars. Happy days.

If you think Mark Watney is in a tight spot, look at Jafar Panahi. He is the Iranian director whose works include “The White Balloon” (1995), “The Circle” (2000), and “Offside” (2006). With every film, three things have occurred: he has strengthened his reputation as a wry and dexterous humanist; he has urged us to listen to those Iranians, especially women and children, whose voices might not otherwise be heard; and his overlords have grown ever more convinced that

this guy is a pain in the neck. The crunch came in 2010, when Panahi was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment, on a charge of creating propaganda against the regime, and banned from making movies for twenty years. Since then, he has occupied himself with projects designed to exasperate his foes. One result was a film with the Magrittean title of “This Is Not a Film” (2011), which was reportedly smuggled out on a flash drive concealed in a cake. If only all releases could be handled in so thrilling a fashion. Imagine if the new James Bond movie could arrive inside a chocolate éclair.

Panahi’s latest exercise in outwitting is “Taxi,” in which he plays himself. He spends almost the entire film behind the wheel of a cab, which he drives around Tehran. It’s never quite clear if he has slid under the radar of the authorities, or if they consider life in a car to be a kind of mobile incarceration, which at least will keep him out of mischief. Nice try, fellows. His conversations are filmed by a dashboard camera, which he occasionally swivels around to inspect the road ahead or to record the activity of his passengers, one or two at a time. “What’s that?” he is asked. “An anti-theft device?” “Sort of,” Panahi replies, and he’s right. Simply by catching these lives on the fly, he offers a fresh rebuke to the embezzlement of his free speech.

The people in his taxi are a mixed bunch. Are they actors, or passersby plucked from the streets? We don’t know, and there are no end credits, but the mystery is sweet. We get a loudmouth who, discussing thieves, announces, “If I were head of state, I’d hang a couple of them, just to shake them up,” then adds that

he’s a mugger by trade. There’s a victim of an accident, his head wet with blood, who gets ferried to hospital; a couple of elderly ladies bearing an open goldfish bowl, sloshing with water, as if lent to Panahi by the ghost of Mack Sennett; and a man named Omid—stumpy and sweaty, delivering foreign DVDs around town like drugs. (“I brought you ‘The Walking Dead,’ Season Five.”) Then comes Panahi’s niece Hana, a chatterbox of ten or eleven, and Arash, an acquaintance from his neighborhood. Finally, we meet “the flower lady,” as Hana calls her, a human-rights lawyer en route to a client in jail. She lays a red rose next to the windshield, as if by the headstone of a grave.

The urge to film is never far away. The wounded man dictates his last will and testament into Panahi’s iPhone; Arash has CCTV footage on his iPad, showing him being mugged, which he wants to share with Panahi; and, as for Hana, she has to shoot a short movie for school, under risible restrictions. (For good characters, pupils must “use the sacred names of Islamic saints.”) All this could have yielded something clammy and cloistered, just as Panahi’s status as a martyr for his art could have gulled him into loftiness and pride; and yet, by some miracle, “Taxi” stays as modest as his smile, the point being not to recruit us to his cause but to put us on the side of his compatriots. The mocking of oppression may be steely, but the film’s an easy ride. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Farley Katz, must be received by Sunday, October 11th. The finalists in the September 28th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 26th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).*

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"I think we're starting to move, everyone."*  
Adam Christensen, New York City



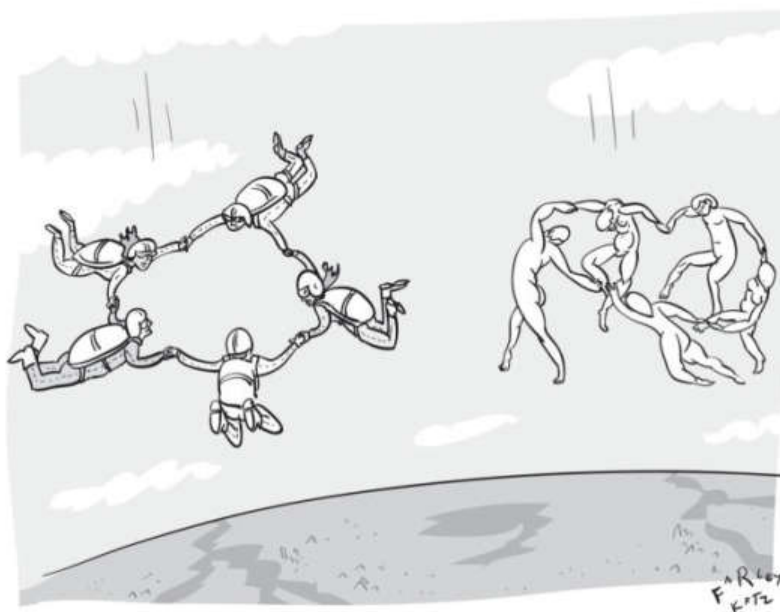
### THE FINALISTS

*"Does he know why we invited him to the barbecue?"*  
Eric Behrens, Austin, Texas

*"Ugh. New money."*  
Carl Moon, Philadelphia, Pa.

*"You were right—I guess it is a water buffalo."*  
Michael Powell, Carthage, Texas

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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